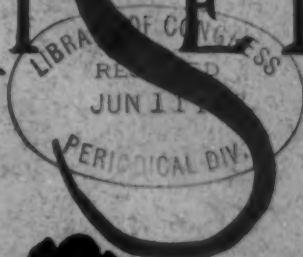


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THE METEMPSYCHOSIS OF THE OGDENS

By Edward S. Van Zile

"If this were played upon the stage now, I could condemn it as an impossible fiction."—SHAKESPEARE.

"I DON'T wish to be unjust or tyrannical, my child, but——"
"But you are both, father," cried Gwendolen Ogden, her dark eyes flashing fire as they noted the stubborn, relentless expression of Richard Ogden's heavy, immobile, clean-shaven face.

"I must say, Gwendolen, that as an only child——" began Mr. Ogden anew.

"But you're my only father," put in Gwendolen, argumentatively.

"Sit down, girl," ordered Ogden, peremptorily. "We must talk this out, once for all. I can't have you striding up and down my library with your hands behind your back. It's distinctly unfeminine, Gwendolen."

The tall, handsome, neatly-tailored young woman threw herself into an arm-chair, and turned a defiant face toward her frowning parent, who had withdrawn his chair from the desk at which he had been writing letters before his daughter had abruptly interrupted his privacy.

"If your mother had lived——" Ogden began again, on a new tack.

"But mama didn't live," remarked the girl, bluntly. "And I don't see, father, what that has to do with the matter at all. I've got to do as other girls in my position do. You're a rich man, father; you've told me so yourself."

"It's not altogether a question of money, Gwendolen," said her father, in an explanatory way toying rather

nervously with a quaint, Oriental paper-weight on his desk; "it's—well, it's a whole lot of things. I disapprove of your squandering thousands of dollars every year on nonsense. Do you know what your luncheon for the débutantes cost? It was shocking, my dear, actually shocking. Your horses, dresses, traveling expenses, pocket-money and 'extras'—whatever they may be—amount to an enormous sum, every quarter. I make you a handsome allowance, and what do you do with it? You throw it away on silly, useless things, just because fashion decrees that you must live in a certain way. Have you no independence, no originality, Gwen? If I were in your place, I'd break away from the conventional ties that bind me to an aimless and selfish mode of life, and do something worth while in this world. What would you think of your father, my child if I should abandon my affairs to become a club lounge and golf fiend?"

Gwendolen's clear-cut, changeable face—she resembled her mother in coloring, feature and bearing—displayed the mingled astonishment and annoyance that her father's words had aroused in her youthful soul.

"Would you like to have me learn type-writing, father?" she asked, rather flippantly.

"That's not fair, Gwendolen," commented her father, clutching tightly

the curiously carved paper-weight, in his effort to restrain his rising anger. "But I should like to have you display more common-sense in your general mode of life. Teas, calls, collons, house-parties, rides, drives, dinners, and—always and forever—flirtations; these make up your existence, my child. Do you consider it a noble career? And now you come to me for more money—more money for what?—for more nonsense, of course. You can't blame me, Gwendolen, for feeling annoyed."

There had come a blush into the girl's cheeks, and her dark eyes glowed, dangerously.

"And do you lead a noble career, father?" she cried, forced to make a sacrifice of filial reverence in an effort at self-defense. "Is the formation of a new trust a praiseworthy achievement? Is the increase of your fortune by another million anything to your credit? What I spend of your income is a bagatelle. You and I, squandering money day and night, couldn't check the increase of your wealth, father. But you devote all your time, not to the best and highest use of your income, but to the quickest and cleverest increase of your capital. If my career is silly, as you say it is, father, at least it is based upon the reasonable proposition that it is impossible to get too much pleasure out of life."

"You infer, of course," commented Mr. Ogden, coldly, "that it is not impossible to get too much money out of business. You talk like a socialist, Gwendolen. Where did you get hold of these astonishing theories?"

The girl stood erect, her cheeks still slightly flushed, but the gleam of anger gone from her eyes.

"I have no theories, father," she said, wearily. "I merely live from day to day, getting what fun I can out of life. And I'm not to have the money? You absolutely refuse to advance me a thousand, father?"

The frown returned to Mr. Ogden's brow, and he again nervously clutched the Oriental paper-weight.

"I refuse to countenance your extravagance, Gwendolen," he said, stubbornly. "If you could put yourself in my place——"

"*She can, and she must!*" came a voice from nowhere, that filled the library like a clap of thunder just above the roof of the house.

Richard Ogden dropped the Oriental paper-weight as if it had burned his hand, and, lol beside his desk stood a tall, shadowy form, vague in outline, but sufficiently real to fill the distraught souls of father and daughter with dread and terror.

"*The decree hath gone forth,*" went on the voice, more subdued now than at first, but none the less horrifying, "*the decree hath gone forth that ye must change bodies for a season; thou who wast Richard the father, to be Gwendolen the daughter; and thou who wast Gwendolen the daughter, to be, in the sight of men, Richard the father. And may your eyes, that are closed, be opened; and may the wisdom that ye lack be yours, when the time for thy deliverance shall be at hand. Farewell! farewell! farewell!*"

It was as if the library-table had been struck by lightning. A flash, a clash; then, silence and a faint odor of sandalwood filled the room.

In her father's chair, with her soul imprisoned in his body, sat Gwendolen, gasping for breath.

"A fan, father," she murmured; "and water!"

Richard Ogden, in the outward seeming of a tall, handsome young woman, stood clasping the back of a stately chair, and glaring in amazement and horror at his daughter—or was it himself? His mind was too confused to grasp at once the full significance of the uncanny visitation that had begotten a miniature thunderstorm and a stupendous miracle in his library.

"It was that infernal paper-weight," he muttered, striving to loosen Gwendolen's tight-fitting jacket, while he gazed gloomily at the pale, heavy face of Richard Ogden.

"Did you ever read 'Vice Versa'?

father?" he presently heard Gwendolen asking, in his discarded voice.

"No, but I've seen 'A Message from Mars'," he replied, flushing angrily at the high pitch of his voice. "Why do you wear your gowns so tight, Gwendolen? I've always warned you against it, and now I know it's destroying your health. No wonder you're so flighty and unreasonable."

The heavy, unmelodious sobs of an old man came from the chair by the desk, and Richard Ogden was disgusted to see what an undignified exhibition his daughter was making of him.

"I'm no more flighty than you are," expostulated Gwendolen, in the heavy basso that her father had heretofore been proud of. "Why don't you sit down, father, and stop fussing with that gown? You'll ruin it, if you keep on."

To be thus chided in his own voice and by his own daughter was too much for old Ogden's nerves, and he sank awkwardly into a chair, a great longing for trousers sweeping over him.

"What are we going to do about it, my child?" he cried, in a high treble that jarred upon his exposed nerves.

"I suppose you'll take up social settlement work," he heard his deep voice saying, sarcastically. "There's the Vanderheydens' ball to-morrow night. Oh, father, I was looking forward to it so eagerly! You won't want to go—and I can't."

Again an old man's sobs, inspired by a young girl's despair, came to him from the desk.

"Maybe," suggested Ogden, gazing down with surprise and admiration at his daughter's beautiful hands, "maybe we'll be—er—readjusted by that time, little girl. Just what did that—er—electrical disturbance say? Do you recall it—or his—exact words, Gwendolen?"

A cold chill ran down the speaker's beautiful back. From nowhere in particular came a grave, deep, sonorous voice, saying:

"May your eyes that are closed be opened; and may the wisdom that ye lack be yours, when the time for thy deliver-

ance shall be at hand! Farewell! farewell! farewell! farewell!"

"Stop!" shouted Richard Ogden, in his daughter's most imperious tones. "Come back! I wish to talk to you. I'll give you a hundred for—er—Oriental—er—missions, if you'll stop fooling, and—change us back. Do you hear me?"

But there came no answer to this cry of despair. The only sound in the library arose from Gwendolen's hysterical, hoarse sobs.

Ogden sat, motionless and silent, gazing down musingly at the rich jewels upon his daughter's patrician hand. For the first time in his life, the realization came to him that there was a limit to the power of money.

"Oh, father!" he heard his own voice exclaiming, presently, "I've got such a queer, nervous feeling. Would you—that is, would I—or would we both, do you think—?"

"What do you mean, Gwendolen?" he asked, petulantly, as his voice remained silent.

"I mean, father," said the girl, sitting erect in her chair, and crossing her father's legs in a characteristic way, "I mean that I feel just as if I'd like to smoke one of your cigars. I imagine that it would quiet my—or, rather, your—nerves. Would it jar you too much, father, to see me smoking?"

"Nothing'll ever jar me again," piped the old man, in sad falsetto. "Light up, won't you? I'd join you, little girl, if I dared; but, somehow, I don't feel quite up to it."

Father and daughter watched each other furtively, during the next few moments, oppressed by the awkwardness of the situation, and each curious regarding the other's thoughts. After clumsily lighting her cigar, Gwendolen had sunk back in her father's chair, and was blowing smoke into the air with the manner of one who is keenly enjoying the indulgence of a bad habit. Not far away sat her father, gazing at her enviously with her own big, dark, melancholy eyes, through which shone the soul of a querulous old man who

had been forced by a cruel fate to do his smoking vicariously.

"Do you—er—do you like it, Gwen?" he asked, presently, smoothing his daughter's luxuriant hair back from his throbbing brow.

"It's very quieting," admitted the girl, gazing discontentedly at her father's pudgy hand as she knocked the ashes from her weed. "But are we dreaming, or awake, father? Isn't it marvelous how calmly we have taken it?"

"It would be such bad form, my child, to make a fuss about it," remarked Ogden, in his daughter's most conventional tones. Then, he arose and began to pace the library, nervously.

"I can't have you striding up and down my library with your hands behind your back," he heard his own voice repeating, sarcastically, between puffs; "it's distinctly unfeminine, father."

"That won't do, Gwendolen," he cried, angrily, striking the highest note of her conversational pitch. "We mustn't throw stones at each other now, or the situation will become actually unbearable. Does anybody dine with us this evening, daughter?"

"The Marmaduke Mortimers, Teddy Langdon and Evelyn de Peyster," answered the girl, with a hoarse groan.

"It's horrible!" piped the old man, tripping over his skirt as a thought struck him, and he hurried toward his desk.

"Where's that diabolical paper-weight, Gwen?" he asked, feverishly, gazing searchingly at the carpet. "I dropped it right here just as the storm struck us."

"It's gone!" groaned Gwendolen, laying aside her cigar, uncrossing her father's legs, and peering at the floor with hopeless old eyes.

"Yes, it's gone," admitted her father, tripping back to his chair without stumbling over his gown. "I don't suppose there's any use offering a reward for it."

"No," growled his daughter, gloomily. "Our money won't help us much

to get out of this scrape, I fear, father."

"Our money?" repeated Ogden, in a falsetto that implied suspicion.

"Well," he heard his own voice say, reflectively, "I suppose it's really your money, father; but I'll have to look after it, won't I? That is, of course, until we recover, so to speak."

"But," murmured old Ogden, clasping his beautiful hands with a gesture characteristic of his daughter, and then tightening his fists, remembering who he was, "but, my dear child, the thing is impossible. Of course, with my advice, you might run my affairs for a time. But how am I going to attend to your matters? It's going to be very awkward for both of us. I can't dance."

Richard Ogden had never before heard his own voice ring out with so hearty a laugh as now vibrated through the library. He was annoyed, and justly so, at his daughter's ill-timed hilarity.

"What ails you, Gwendolen?" he cried, at the top of her voice. "Do you consider this affair a laughing matter? Just wait until you get a twinge of rheumatism—I've had several attacks of it to-day—and you'll wonder where the joke comes in. There! What's the matter now?"

The girl was weeping noisily, almost boisterously.

"How'll we get through dinner, father?" she cried, in the pathetic tones of an old man in sore distress of mind. "We'll have to be very, very careful, or they'll think we're—we're very much changed."

"Well, we are," purred Ogden, playfully. "So far as I'm concerned, I'm not sure that it isn't a change for the better, Gwen. Am I to flirt with Teddy Langdon at dinner?"

"How inconsistent you are, father!" growled the girl, in Ogden's gruffest tones. "A while ago, you were accusing me of the sin of frivolity, and now, I actually believe, you look forward to a dinner-party and a chance to—to——"

"I don't wonder that you can't finish the sentence," murmured her father, wearily. "I think we'll both be crazy before to-morrow if that diabolical electric disturbance doesn't return to-night. By the way, Gwen, I wish you'd light another cigar. I think it rather soothes my nerves to see you smoke."

II

"It's an amazing situation," remarked Gwendolen, musingly, in her father's deep basso, as she lighted a match. "Here I sit, smoking your cigars, father, in order to quiet your nerves, or mine, or, perhaps, both. But are you grateful to me for puffing tobacco in your behalf? No, father; you show no consideration for my feelings. You threaten me with a return of your rheumatism, and, rather brazenly, rejoice at the prospect of one of my flirtations. It is unbearable. Well, James?"

The butler, a typical lackey of the Anglo-American school, murmured an apology for his intrusion.

"But, Mr. Ogden, it's this way, sir. The hexpert, so to speak, sir, from the helectric company, has come to hexamine the bells and lights, Mr. Ogden, the same being hout of horder, as hit were. 'E was sayin' as 'ow 'e'd like to begin 'ere, sir, with your permission, Mr. Ogden."

"Send him here at once, James," ordered Gwendolen, in her father's usual peremptory manner. "You needn't follow him, James."

"Very good, sir. 'E'll be 'ere at once, sir."

With that, the butler retired, and Richard Ogden sprang to Gwendolen's feet in consternation.

"What did you do that for?" he piped, shrilly, glaring at his outward presentment with his daughter's expressive eyes, now aglow with an old man's anger. "Haven't you had enough electric tomfoolery for one day, girl? Do you wish to have this thing get into the newspapers? An

electrical expert, indeed!—the last man on earth I'd care to see me in this—er—undignified female costume! Are you mad, Gwendolen?"

"Sit down and keep cool, papa," commanded the girl, gruffly. "Do you think that I'm going to toddle around in your body for an indefinite period if the transposition was really caused by an electrical disturbance? If you'll keep quiet and try to act like a perfect lady, I'll ask this expert a few questions that may help us, father, to become readjusted. Ah, here he is."

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Ogden," began the thin-faced, keen-eyed electrician, deferentially, as he approached the library-table, glancing at the bulbs above it. "There's nothing much to be done, sir, I imagine. You have had no trouble with the system heretofore?"

"None at all," answered Gwendolen, with her father's most pompous manner. "This is the first time that we've had any serious disturbance—that is, any electrical—as I was saying—"

"You don't know what you're saying," muttered her father, angrily; and the electrician cast a glance of surprise at a beautiful young woman whose garb was conventional but whose manners seemed to be eccentric.

"What I wished to ask you," recommenced Gwendolen, waving one of her father's fat hands in the air, as if to sweep away the cobwebs that she had spun, "what I wished to ask you, sir, was, not what is the matter with our electric lights, but what——?"

"Gwen!" cried the outward seeming of Gwendolen, in a warning falsetto. Again, there came a gleam of astonishment to the electrician's eyes as he glanced furtively at the tailor-made girl, whose nerves, more than the electric lights, seemed to be in need of an expert.

"What I was about to say," went on the girl, emphasizing the note of stubbornness in her father's voice, "was that in the practice of your profession, sir, you must meet with curious electrical phenomena that science

has not been able, as yet, wholly to explain."

"In a measure, that is true, sir," admitted the electrician, leaning against the library-table, and gazing at Mr. Ogden, as he supposed, with the expression of a specialist who is pleased to find a layman taking an interest in the details of his specialty. "Theoretically, there is much that is mysterious about the force that we call electricity. Practically, we have little to learn about it. It is very much, sir, as if we had made a slave of a giant whose origin, nature and general disposition we didn't know much about."

"Very well put, sir," piped the old man, showing his daughter's teeth in an appreciative smile.

"A handsome girl," thought the expert, "but extremely queer. I suppose it's due to the kind of life she leads."

He was recalled to the subject under discussion by Ogden's voice, inspired by Gwendolen's forlorn hope.

"Did you ever, sir, hear of electricity having any psychical influence or power? In other words, could an electric shock change, or in any way modify, an individual's personality, either permanently or temporarily?"

"What's the old man driving at?" the electrician asked himself. Then, he said, aloud: "I have never gone into the subject of the psychical significance of electricity—if it has any. An electric shock could not readily alter a personality, of course, although it might temporarily bring about an apparent, but superficial, change in an individual's character."

"That's it! That's the thing in a nutshell!" cried Ogden, in tones that Gwendolen realized she had used only in moments of unusual enthusiasm. "Temporary! superficial! apparent, not real! That's it! Now, what do you think you could do about it? I mean——"

The electrician was gazing at what appeared to be an excited young woman, with eyes that were big with astonishment. He had never heard

any gossip to the effect that Richard Ogden and his daughter were eccentric; but, surely, they were acting at present in a most unconventional, even flighty, way.

"What my daughter intended to ask," put in Gwendolen, again assuming her father's most pompous bearing, "was this: Suppose that an electrical disturbance had forced its way into an erstwhile happy household——"

"Rubbish!" murmured her father, waving a dainty hand in the air, protestingly.

"Be quiet, girl!" commanded Gwendolen, curtly. "As I was saying, had forced its way into an erstwhile happy household, to the effect that——"

"That the last shall be first and the first last," piped her father, shrilly; "what would you do, then, sir? I ask you confidentially—you won't be quoted, sir—what would you do under such circumstances?"

A frightened expression had come into the electrician's thin, pale face, as these questions had been hurled at him by a beautiful young woman, who seemed to be laboring under some internal excitement that caused her voice to tremble, her cheeks to flush, and her dark eyes to flash.

"Won't you be seated, sir?" asked Gwendolen, pointing a pudgy finger toward a chair. The electrician was glad to avail himself of this invitation, for he had begun to feel a bit faint.

"You were about to say?" queried the expert, gazing interrogatively at him whom he supposed to be Mr. Richard Ogden.

"I was about to say," began Gwendolen, impressively, having learned by this time how to use her father's voice most effectively, "I was about to say—and I trust, my daughter, I shall not be interrupted—that to a rising young electrician there could come nothing more gratifying than a new, unprecedented professional problem, especially if, in its solution, there lay a large sum of money."

"Very good!" cried old Ogden, in a kind of whistle.

"But it's the stiffest thing you ever tackled, sir," went on Gwendolen, shaking her father's fist at an imaginary adversary.

"It's a dandy, in its way, sir," giggled the old man, nervously.

The electrician shifted his feet uneasily, and then glanced at his watch.

"Pardon me," he said, firmly, "but my time is not my own. Will it take you long, Mr. Ogden, to give me the necessary data?"

"We haven't got 'em!" cried the old man, clasping Gwendolen's hands together, in a hopeless kind of way. "There was a roar and a flash—and there you are. If you call that data, I don't. But you're welcome to what we know, sir."

"Will you permit me, my daughter, to take charge of this matter?" asked Gwendolen, gruffly. Then, she turned her father's heavy, immobile face toward the electrician.

"Our difficulty lies just here, sir!" she went on. "If we tell you the whole truth, you will doubt our sanity. If we suppress a part of the truth, your assistance can be of no service to us. You have, doubtless, a scientific mind. Your mental attitude, of course, is one of indifference, or even mockery, toward phenomena not recognized as coming within the ken of science."

"No such phenomena, Mr. Ogden, exist in these enlightened days. Many of the greatest scientists in the world have become interested, of late, in manifestations that were thought to be, a few years ago, beneath the notice of the sane investigator. Even ghosts are now being studied by a society composed of men famous in various departments of science."

The electrician spoke with the air of one whose scientific specialty had not tended to narrow his mind.

"But you've never happened to hear of a spectral old man in black in your profession?" piped up Mr. Ogden, eagerly, much to his daughter's annoyance.

"I'm glad," the latter hastened to say, in her father's most superior manner, "I'm glad, sir, that you hold such

a liberal attitude toward the scientific problems of the day. I am much inclined to lay the whole matter before you; for I assure you, sir, that my daughter and myself are in sore need of advice."

"You see, it wouldn't be likely, sir," suggested old Ogden, with a girlish giggle, "it wouldn't be at all likely that my daughter and I should both go crazy at the same moment."

"Gwendolen!" exclaimed his daughter, reprovingly.

The electrician had risen to his feet, and was again glancing at his watch.

"I can see, Mr. Ogden," he said, addressing Gwendolen, without knowing it, "I can see that you have much to tell me that must be of the most intense interest from a scientific standpoint. But, as I said before, my time is not my own. I am at leisure in the evening. If you should care to consult me professionally in this matter, I could call upon you at any time before midnight. As it is, I must take my departure at once."

"Come back at eleven to-night, will you?" cried old Ogden, like a drowning person catching at a straw.

"If it would be convenient for you to return at eleven," suggested Gwendolen, getting awkwardly to her father's feet, "we should be much pleased to lay before you, sir, a most amazing problem, the solution of which, as I said before, would greatly redound to your financial benefit, though, under the circumstances, of course, it could add nothing to your fame."

"Thank you," said the electrician, bowing stiffly. "I shall be here, sir, at eleven to-night, sharp. Good day, sir. Good day, Miss Ogden."

Thereupon, he hurried from the library, concealing, as best he could, his relief at making his escape. In the hall, he came upon the butler.

"How long have you been in Mr. Ogden's service?" asked the electrician, abruptly.

The butler drew himself up haughtily, and gazed with cold displeasure at his inquisitor. "Hi've 'ad the honor of serving Mr. Ogden for the past five

years," he answered, with the air of one who is polite rather by habit than inclination.

"Rather peculiar, aren't they?—Ogden and his daughter. Somewhat eccentric, I mean."

The butler threw open the front door with exaggerated ceremony.

"Hi find them very congenial, sir," answered the loyal servant, freeing. "Hi trust that you will not find it necessary to return, sir."

"Oh, yes, James," remarked the electrician, a dry smile playing about his thin lips, as he passed out; "I shall be back at eleven to-night—by appointment."

III

"It doesn't seem to have been very successful," grumbled Gwendolen, leaning back heavily in her father's chair, as she felt a twinge of his predicted rheumatism.

"Well, whose fault was it?" asked her father, in a shrill, accusatory voice. "You did all the talking, didn't you?"

"Not all of it," protested his daughter, in a melancholy basso.

"But he looked at you as if he thought you were crazy," piped Ogden, indiscreetly.

"And how did he look at you, father? He'll tell his wife at dinner that the famous society success, Gwendolen Ogden, is the weirdest, most eccentric young thing that ever happened. Frankly, father, you make an absurd person of me."

"And what do you make of me, Gwendolen?" cried the old man, kicking petulantly at the air with a dainty little foot that pleased his eye, despite his annoyance. "Do you wish to know? It's a caricature, that's all it is. You deliberately exaggerate all my delicate little peculiarities. That's what startled that electrician, and made him take to flight. You always put the loud pedal on my rather melodious voice, and what's the result? You make me sound, so to speak, explosive. When you become emphatic, I appear to thunder. And you use my

gestures badly, Gwen. I have never before this black day, during a long life of dignified self-poise, acted like a feverish Frenchman suffering from acute dyspepsia."

"Father!" growled the girl, protestingly.

"I tell you, Gwendolen," continued Mr. Ogden, in a trembling falsetto, "that you mustn't exaggerate me, as it were, or you'll make me a laughing-stock to the whole world. I'm not a high-strung old donkey, with kittenish ways. Kindly bear that in mind, my daughter. That electrical expert has gone away from here with a very curious impression of Richard Ogden; you may be sure of that, Gwendolen."

"And what do you suppose, father, he thinks of me—of Gwendolen Ogden?" asked the girl, gruffly, striking the desk with her father's clenched fist. "Do you think you're a great—well, a great actress, I suppose I should say? Did you catch the expression in his eyes when he looked at you, thinking you were I? Really, father, you were awfully funny. If it wasn't for the horror of the frightful plight we're in, I could laugh now at the way you acted. That hysterical giggle of yours, father! You must struggle against it! Try to be brave and strong, and don't give way to it. It makes me seem insane. I'll admit that it's good form, at present, to be enthusiastic and vivacious, but you mustn't become delirious, father. You actually looked, at times, like a beautiful young woman laughing madly at a nightmare."

Ogden sat gazing moodily at his daughter's fair hands, folded wearily in his lap. He was sufficiently just by nature to admit that there was much truth in his daughter's accusation. He realized that he had, as it were, gone to extremes as a young woman, and the possibilities of the near future struck a chill to his bosom.

"We must hold a rehearsal before we dress for dinner," he remarked, in Gwendolen's quietest tones. "Ring for James, won't you, Gwen? And, for heaven's sake, don't roar at

him as if he were deaf. And don't be always tugging at my collar and cuffs. It looks flighty—suggests a symptom of paresis, in fact."

The butler entered the library hurriedly. Despite his haughty rejection of the electrician's suggestion that Mr. Ogden and his daughter were eccentric, James was annoyed and somewhat worried by the impression they had made upon the keen-eyed expert.

"You showed the man out?" queried Gwendolen, in her father's calmest manner. "What did he say to you, James?"

The butler, for once in his phlegmatic life, showed embarrassment, to hide which he answered too hastily for discretion.

"E showed a tendency, so to speak, sir, to be himpudent. 'Is remarks, Mr. Ogden, sprung, hif you'll permit me the suggestion, from the henvy of the lower classes."

"But this electrician, James," objected Gwendolen, pompously, anxious to draw the butler out, "this electrician is not one of the lower classes. He is a highly intelligent and well-educated specialist, drawing a large salary for his scientific attainments."

The butler drew himself up stiffly. "'E's no gentleman, sir. I hassure you, 'e's no gentleman."

"James," piped up Mr. Ogden, growing impatient at his daughter's cross-questioning, "James, did you take the exact time of that—er—that little thunder-storm this afternoon?"

The butler could not refrain from a gasp of astonishment when he turned, as he imagined, toward his employer's daughter.

"Thunder-storm, Miss Ogden?" he exclaimed, with an unusual display of animation. "Hif you'll be so good as to permit me to say so, miss, there 'asn't been a cloud in the sky to-day."

"You heard nothing about an hour ago? no crash? You saw no lightning?" Mr. Ogden was using Gwendolen's voice at the top notch.

"No, miss," answered James, uneasily, fearing to offend his fair inquisitor.

"That will do, James," said Gwendolen, waving a pudgy hand toward the door; "you may go."

The butler strode from the library, agitation in his face and bearing. The astounding suspicion had come to him that the electrician might have had some reasonable cause for his peculiar remarks.

"What in the name of common-sense did you do that for, father?" grumbled Gwendolen, her father's heavy face flushed with annoyance.

"The trouble is," cried old Ogden, like a petulant girl, "the trouble is that you think you're brighter than I am, Gwendolen. You act as if I'd lost my mind, as well as my body. What I wished to find out was whether that—er—electrical disturbance was general or only local. You seem to mistrust my ability to do and say the right thing at the right moment, my child. There you are, tugging at my cuffs again. What ails you, Gwendolen? Can't you wear my garments in a quiet and gentlemanly manner?"

"Will the pot kindly quit calling the kettle black?" protested the girl, gruffly. "Just look at my hair, father! You've pushed it all out of shape, trying to rub a little sense into your head."

"Into *your* head, you mean," retorted her father, giggling again. "But, really, Gwendolen, these recriminations must cease. We must learn to take each other calmly. It's nearly time to dress for dinner."

"I shall dine as I am," growled Gwendolen, curtly.

"But you can't," said old Ogden, rather hysterically. "It is your duty, my daughter, to keep up my position. I forbid you to receive our guests in a business suit. It would awaken suspicion, at once."

"What are you going to wear, daddy?" asked the girl, with a hoarse chuckle.

"What I have on," answered her father, in a sharp falsetto. "It's a becoming costume, isn't it?"

"So is mine—or, rather, yours, father. You always did look better in

grays than blacks. You show your age in your evening clothes."

There was a touch of hysteria in Gwendolen's voice when her father used it again to exclaim:

"If we could only find that paper-weight, Gwen! I wonder what that black demon's name is? He seems to be charged with electricity. If I could get hold of him on the long-distance telephone——"

"Why do you talk such nonsense, father?" growled Gwendolen, gloomily. "We are absolutely powerless in this matter, and you know it. He'll come back to us, in his own good time. Meanwhile, we must make the best of it. I suppose, as you say, daddy, we must change our clothes for dinner. But I don't——"

"I didn't say that at all, child," protested the old man, feverishly. "I said that you mustn't receive our guests in that business suit of mine. You'll find it easy enough to get into my evening clothes. But how the dickens could I get out of this costume into one of your dinner gowns? And, if I managed it, Gwen, I'd be sure to catch cold. Dr. Robertson told me only yesterday that I must avoid draughts."

"That isn't logical, father," remarked Gwendolen, gruffly. "I haven't had a cold since I came out—which is the important point, so far as you are concerned at present, worse luck."

"But how about your maid, Gwen?" asked old Ogden, a slight flush coming into his damask cheeks. "I can't get dressed without her, but I couldn't endure her presence. I'm rather sorry, now, that I've always been too old-fashioned to have a valet."

"I'm very glad of it," remarked his daughter, with all the emphasis of her father's lower register. "As for my maid, you'd better dismiss her for the evening, when you go up-stairs."

"What is your maid's name?" queried old Ogden, shrilly.

"Jeannette," answered his former voice.

"Summon James, will you? I wish to give him an order, Gwen."

"What are you going to do now, father?" growled his daughter, suspiciously. "Remember, James suspects that you are queer to-day."

Old Ogden waved his hands in the air, impatiently.

"Send for James, or I'll make the house resound with your screams. Just remember, Gwendolen, that I didn't resign my paternal authority when I was hurled into your alabaster body. Obey me at once, or I'll reduce your quarterly allowance one-half."

"That's beyond your power at present, father," remarked the girl, grimly. "But I'll have James in, at once. And do be careful, father. Don't giggle; and, if you can sit comfortably, as a woman should, I'd be much obliged to you."

As the butler reentered the library, his master pulled himself together, and determined to act like a perfect lady.

"James," he began, in his daughter's most dulcet tones, fumbling at her bodice, and then turning red in the face. "Gwen—I mean—er—father," he recommenced, "you'll find a roll of bills in my—your waistcoat-pocket. Toss it over here, won't you?"

The butler stood watching the scene with an unmoved countenance, but with eyes that could not hide their gleam of mingled astonishment and protest.

Having regained his money, Mr. Ogden found his self-control also restored to him.

"My—my maid, you know, James; her name's—er—Jeannette; last name doesn't matter. You're to give her this, James; it's a ten-dollar bill. Tell her to leave the house at once. She's to dine at a restaurant, and spend the evening at a theatre. And, James, tell her she may sleep late in the morning. I sha'n't need her before ten o'clock."

Forcing himself to disguise the conflicting emotions that were at war in his flunkey soul, James respectfully grasped the bank-note extended to him by the white, tapering hand of his young mistress.

"Is that hall, Miss Ogden?" he asked, perfunctorily.

"That's all," piped old Ogden, in a tone of relief. "Don't forget the name, James; Jeannette, you know. Her last name doesn't count."

The butler stalked, with moody dignity, out of the library, softly closing the door behind him.

"There, Gwendolen," cried her father, in a triumphant voice; "what do you think of that? I could give some of our leading actors points in their art, don't you think so?"

He glanced with large, shining, youthful eyes at an old man in a state of semi-collapse.

"It is simply horrible!" groaned Gwendolen, rubbing a chubby, cold hand across her father's brow. "James thinks I'm crazy—I'm sure he does!"

IV

RICHARD OGDEN, gazing down moodily at his beautiful hands and dainty little feet, sat alone in the library, after Gwendolen had departed, in the lowest of spirits, to dress his portly old form for a dinner-party. His reverie was painful. Despite his charming exterior, the old man felt ill at ease.

"At my time of life," he murmured, rather foolishly, to himself, "such sudden changes are distressing. And that infernal electrical disturbance came so unexpectedly! If we'd had a few moments in which to prepare ourselves for a new deal! But it was crash, bang! and here we are, in danger every moment of making a public exhibition of a kind of private miracle. It's not merely embarrassing, it's almost disgraceful."

The silence was oppressive. Presently, a clock relieved the situation by slowly and distinctly announcing the hour of five.

"Half an hour before Gwen wishes me to go up-stairs," murmured the old man, restlessly. Then, he seized the skirt of his tailor-made gown, and tripped lightly down the library to a corner locker not devoted to books. A moment later, he stood beside the library-table gazing down at a decanter,

a siphon of vichy and a tall glass, Gwendolen's beautiful face wreathed in smiles.

"Of course, it's an experiment," murmured the old man to himself, in a flute-like voice. "I don't believe Gwendolen knows what a high-ball is. Just how it will affect her constitution, I have no way of knowing. But I'll have nervous prostration or melancholia if I try to go through the next hour without a bracer. So, here goes! Live or die, survive or perish, I'll have one high-ball, at least. And I don't believe it will affect me, after all. Gwendolen, if I remember rightly, has been out two seasons."

Mr. Ogden's worst fears were soon allayed. The stimulant acted very nicely, and, leaving the decanter on the table, in case of emergency, he returned to his chair, seating himself therein with a contented giggle.

"I believe it's going to take all right," he soliloquized. "Perhaps, tomorrow, if we are not readjusted, I may have the courage to try a cigar. But I mustn't go too fast, at first. Great Scott! who the dickens is this?"

The library door had opened and closed quickly, and down the room had glided a young woman, evidently in a high state of excitement.

"Oh, mademoiselle, what does eet mean?" gasped the dark-eyed damsel, coming to a standstill beside the library-table, and thrusting a ten-dollar bill toward the old man, whose white cheek was flushed, while his beautiful hands had turned cold. "You send me thees, and tell me—your Jeannette—to begone to ze café and ze theatre! Who ees to dress mademoiselle's hair? Who ees to arrange her corsage? How—oh, tell me, how has your Jeannette offended her beautiful meestress? *Je ne comprends pas!* Tell me, mademoiselle, what ees ze mattaire, *je vous prie!*"

"Please don't be—so explosive!" piped old Ogden, petulantly, putting up a fair hand, as if to ward off a blow. "Isn't ten dollars enough, Jeannette? Can't you make an even-

ing of it for that? I'll make it twenty, if you really wish it."

The French girl turned and glanced at the decanter of whiskey and siphon of vichy. Then, she resumed her former attitude, and stood gazing at her young mistress with eyes big and black with amazement and reproach.

"Mademoiselle ees not well," she affirmed, presently. "Jeannette will not go out to-night. Will not mademoiselle come up to her dressing-room? There ees none too much time for your hair, even now, mademoiselle. You will pardon me for saying so, but your hair ees vare much tousled."

"Well—er—you see, Jeannette," explained Mr. Ogden, thrusting Gwendolen's dark locks back from her damp forehead, "you see, we—er—had quite a sharp little thunder-storm here this afternoon, and my—chignon, or pompadour, got blown about a bit. But I'll tie it up all right by myself. Don't give yourself a moment's uneasiness about my hair. Run along, now, Jeannette, *ma petite*. Go down to some café, and have a nice dinner. Then, go to a play—something lively, you know—and come back any time. Good-bye!"

Jeannette had hesitated for a moment after the conclusion of Mr. Ogden's undignified remarks, unwilling to abandon her mistress in such an amazing and unprecedented plight. But it was evident that her devotion at this crisis would not be well received; so, slowly and reluctantly, she turned to leave the library.

"*Au revoir, mademoiselle*," she murmured, sorrowfully, as she approached the door.

"You ought to have quite a fine time with ten dollars, Jeannette," the old man called after her, in a youthful tone; "but, as I said, if you wish ten more, why——"

But Jeannette had disappeared before he could complete the sentence.

"I'm glad she's gone," murmured Ogden. "A night off will do her good. She looks worried and nervous.

I'm afraid Gwendolen overworks the girl. But she's too sudden for my taste. If Gwendolen and I can't get the electricity out of our systems, I'll be obliged to discharge this Jeannette."

Impulsively, the old man, who was looking strangely beautiful at this moment, the recent high-ball having flushed his velvety cheeks, and a gleam of excitement having come into Gwendolen's dark, luminous eyes, touched a button that brought the butler at once to the library.

"Has she gone, James?" asked Mr. Ogden, in the voice of an overwrought girl.

"Do you mean Jeannette, Miss Ogden?" asked the butler, his eyes resting, in pained surprise for a moment, upon the decanter. "Hif you do, miss, I may say as 'ow she 'as left the 'ouse for the hevening, miss."

"That's one for our side," murmured the old man, contentedly. Then, it flashed into his mind that it would be well to take time by the forelock.

"I wish you to exercise great care at dinner to-night, James. The fact is that my father is not feeling especially well, and you must not become confused if he should happen to do or say anything that might seem—eccentric. You see, James, that little thunder-storm this afternoon affected his nerves. You'll bear this in mind, won't you, James?"

"Yes, miss," answered the butler, meekly. "Shall I return this decanter and siphon to the locker, with your permission, miss?"

James stood gazing respectfully, for a time, at what seemed to be a handsome young woman engaged in a mental conflict. The girl glanced several times from his stolid face to the decanter and back again. Then, old Ogden said in smooth, soft, dulcet tones:

"If you would be so kind, James, as to pour me out about two fingers, please. Then, fill the glass to the very top with vichy. After that, you may return those glasses to their hiding-place."

For once, in a long life of professional obedience to orders, the butler was inclined to mutiny. While it was true that Miss Ogden did not seem to be at all under the influence of a stimulant, James harbored a healthy prejudice against alcohol as a plaything for young women. But habit proved to be stronger than prejudice, in this instance, and, after a momentary hesitation, the servant found himself carefully obeying the behest of his young mistress. He had just handed the girl the bubbling high-ball, and was about to remove the decanter from the table, when a portly, pompous old gentleman, handsomely garbed in evening dress, entered the library with a kind of hysterical giggle that made his heavy face look almost idiotic as James, tray in hand, paused to glance at it.

"What does this mean?" cried Gwendolen, astonishment and dismay echoing through her father's voice. "Did you feel faint—my daughter?"

"Faint?" repeated old Ogden, shrilly, sipping his high-ball. "Faint's not the word, Gwen—I mean, father. I was actually in a comatose condition, my—my dear. If it hadn't been for James, who happened to know where to find a restorative, I wouldn't have been one, two, three by dinner-time."

The girl had dropped into a chair, her father's heavy face displaying the consternation that had filled her soul with panic.

"Leave the room, James!" she ordered, gruffly. "We won't need you again before dinner."

The butler, turning the key of the locker, hurried from the library, striving to maintain his usual haughty indifference to externals, but inwardly alarmed at the possibilities of the near future.

"I am amazed at you, father," growled the girl, glaring angrily at a stunningly handsome young woman who sat across the room, contentedly sipping whiskey and vichy, apparently indifferent to the rapid flight of time. "What will James think of me?

How many of—of those have you had, father?"

"Not more than is good for you, my dear," replied the old man, almost merrily. "You see, Gwen, it's been a very trying afternoon, and what with electric shocks and that explosive maid of yours, and the awful ordeal before us, and everything, I really needed a bracer. But you needn't worry, my child. It's taking very nicely. I suppose it's time for me to dress."

"I laid out in your room everything you'll need, father," remarked his daughter in a dull, hopeless voice.

"I think I can manage things well enough," murmured the old man, reflectively. "I may make a few mistakes, of course; but, when you come to think of it, my child, it's amazing how much we learn as we go through life. But the gown will stump me, naturally. By the way, my dear, if you'll pardon the question, when you dress for dinner, at which end, so to speak, do you generally begin?"

Gwendolen laughed aloud in her father's hearty voice.

"You'd better do my hair first, daddy. Do you think you can manage it?"

"Oh, I'll tie it up all right," cried the old man, in a kind of self-satisfied whistle. "That's what I said to that little French bundle of firecrackers. 'Jeannette,' I said, very gently and kindly, you know, 'Jeannette, give yourself no uneasiness about my bangs and switches. I can pin them up, Jeannette,' I said, perfectly calm all the time; 'I can pin them up, Jeannette to—er—beat the band!'"

"Father!" cried his daughter in dismay, tugging at an eighteen-inch collar as if it choked her. "Has Jeannette been here?"

"She came in like a lion, and she went out like a whole menagerie," answered old Ogden, petulantly. "But she ought to have a fine time with ten dollars, don't you think so, Gwen? I was perfectly willing to give her more, but she wouldn't wait. She's proud, my dear. If we aren't discharged——"

"Discharged!" queried a pompous-looking man, whose heavy face wore a puzzled, worried expression.

"That's what I said, Gwendolen, 'discharged,'" piped her father, hotly. "If we aren't discharged electrically to-morrow, we'll discharge that French pyrotechnical display in the morning. But this is neither here nor there. I must go to my toilette. You say I'm to begin at the top, Gwen?"

The girl could not refrain from chuckling behind her expansive shirt-front.

"Don't become alarmed, father," she said, reassuringly, rising and following a slender, patrician-looking maiden toward the library door. "You'll find it all easier than you imagine."

Her father paused for a moment near the locker. "Don't you think, my dear, that one more very weak high-ball would——?"

"Not another drop, father," growled the girl, peremptorily. "Hurry, now! If you don't make haste, our guests will be here before you are dressed."

V

It was a relief to Gwendolen to find herself alone in the library. She needed a few moments of self-communion before confronting her guests in the outward seeming of her father. She felt restless, rheumatic, rebellious. That the coming evening would demand of her the firmest self-control, the nicest tact and the most constant vigilance, the girl fully realized. She flushed angrily as she crossed her father's legs, and caught a glimpse of a large foot, pinched by a shining, patent-leather shoe. Gwendolen had always been proud of her dainty, high-arched feet.

"Pardon me, Mr. Ogden," said the butler, entering the library at that moment in a hurried, excited way entirely foreign to his nature and habits. "There is a lady 'ere—hi may say a young lady, sir, if you'll excuse me—hand she says as 'ow she must see you hat once, sir."

A hopeless, helpless, forlorn kind of feeling crept over Gwendolen like a malarial chill. But her courage had not deserted her.

"What is her name, James?"

"She said, with your permission, sir, that you'd know 'er name. She says she must see you hat once, sir, and that you'll hunderstand why."

Gwendolen sat silent for a time, striving to meet this unexpected crisis with outward calmness. She felt like one who is groping for a door-knob in the dark. That her father was trustee of several estates, executor of various wills, and business adviser to a number of women, she well knew. But had one of his clients required his counsel at this unreasonable hour, would she not have sent in her name, with an apology and a hint as to her needs? Surely, her father's present caller was most unconventional in her mode of procedure. There seemed to be both mystery and menace in her message, and that James had dared to repeat it to his master was proof positive that this young woman, whoever she might be, was not a weak and insignificant personality.

It was very difficult for Gwendolen, as James stood there, gazing respectfully but, perhaps, somewhat impatiently at the outward seeming of his master, to choose between the two courses of action at her disposal. She might order James to dismiss this brazen young woman without more ado; or she might receive her father's untimely caller here in the library for a few brief moments, getting rid of her with as much, or as little, diplomacy as the intruder and her business seemed to call for. This latter course of procedure the girl reluctantly decided to adopt, regretting the necessity of squandering a single volt of her depleted nervous energy before the arrival of her dinner-guests.

"Show the young woman in here, James," said the girl, presently, in her father's gruffest tones. "If—er—my

daughter sends for me, say that I shall be with her, presently."

With splendid self-control, the butler kept his heavy features pinned to their accustomed non-committal place, and stalked pompously from the room, leaving behind him, as he imagined, an old man whose pallor was intensified by contrast with his black costume.

"Father is such a good man," Gwendolen kept repeating, soothingly, to herself. "He is inclined to be autocratic, and I have sometimes felt that he was not as generous as he might be, but I'm sure that is all one can say against him."

She stood erect, not very gracefully, as she saw a young woman, whose blond beauty was almost startling as it broke suddenly upon Gwendolen's gaze, move swiftly toward her. Her caller's attire was simple and not very costly, but thoroughly *à la mode* and extremely becoming to her perfect figure and the delicate shades of her hair and complexion.

"It was so kind of you to receive me at this inopportune hour, Richard," said the fair stranger, thrusting a neatly-gloved hand into Gwendolen's reluctant grasp. "But why do you stare at me, as if I were unwelcome, even uncanny? I thought you were always glad to see me, Richard. But you don't look well. Sit down. Are you faint? Is there anything the matter with you, Richard?"

"Nothing at all," growled Gwendolen, sinking into the chair; "I'm unusually well, in fact. I never felt so young in my life." There was a suggestion of hysteria in the old man's voice as his daughter said this.

His handsome caller, who seemed to be perfectly self-assured, had seated herself calmly in the chair recently occupied by the real Richard Ogden.

"But you don't appear to be glad to see me, Richard," she remarked, complainingly. "You're hungry, I suppose. It's little a man cares about anybody during the *mauvais quatre d'heure* before dinner."

"Knowing that," remarked Gwen-

dolen, relaxing her father's features in a perfunctory smile, "you would not have come here at just this time, unless you had had something of great importance to say."

A pouting, defiant expression crept into the clear-cut, symmetrical face of Richard Ogden's beautiful client.

"You mean, Richard, that it's high time that I justified my intrusion, I suppose. But you must be more patient, really. I have never before seen you in such a mood as this, and I must get accustomed to it, before I can talk much."

"You have much to talk about, then?" asked Gwendolen, in a kind of hoarse groan.

"Not much," retorted the stranger, making an impatient gesture with her right hand. "I wish you to do the talking, Richard. I'm here for advice. *He has come back!*"

"Has he, really?" queried Gwendolen, in a dull, indifferent voice. "Didn't you expect him?"

A combination of annoyance and amazement had flashed into the blond woman's countenance.

"What is the matter with you, Richard?" she asked, again, gazing searchingly at the old man's face. "Expect him, indeed! You know I thought he was dead."

"Pardon me, Mr. Ogden," said James, entering the library at that instant, and pausing near the door. "Hi'm sorry to intrude, sir, but Miss Ogden wishes to know has to whether you're hat liberty to come to 'er hat once, sir."

Gwendolen stood up, catching a twinge of rheumatism as she drew herself erect.

"Tell—er—my daughter, James, that I shall come to her immediately," she said. Then, she reseated herself, feeling that it would be unwarrantably rude to leave the library and her mysterious caller in this impulsive way. "Yes," she managed to say, glancing at the latter, "yes, of course, I knew you thought he was dead. But he has been spared to you. How nice that is, isn't it?"

"Richard!" cried Mr. Ogden's fair client, standing upright, a strange gleam in her blue eyes, her cheeks flushed red.

"You'll accept my congratulations, won't you?" remarked Gwendolen, in her father's most pompous manner, rising with slow dignity, and extending a pudgy hand toward his astonished caller. "I'm so glad that you cared enough for my advice to call—er—at any old time, and get it. Just to think of it! You thought he was dead, and he has come back to you! How thankful you should be! And, now, I'm sure you will excuse me. We have a few guests coming to dinner, and my daughter wishes to consult me concerning various details of the function. It was so kind of you to come to me with your news. You know that I feel very grateful to you for the value you place upon my advice. My great regret is that I could not have devoted more time to you—er—that is, his—to—to—"

The beautiful blonde had been stepping reluctantly backward, retreating in silent protest before the ceremonious politeness of a large, domineering old man, who was evidently trying to sweep her out of the house without the loss of either his temper or his dignity. The anger had died out of her eyes, and they showed nothing but astonishment as they rested upon Richard Ogden's smiling, but determined, face. The young woman's forced retreat was brought to a sharp halt by a shrill falsetto just outside the library door.

"Gwen! for heaven's sake!" said the voice.

The door was flung open, and a disheveled maiden, in a stunning gown of black lace, unfastened at the back, stumbled into the room, her black hair hanging about her ears and forehead, her dark eyes snapping with impatience, her slender, white hands clutching wildly at her corsage.

"My daughter! What does this mean?" exclaimed Gwendolen, gruffly, displaying marvelous presence of mind.

"What does it mean?" piped old

Ogden, hotly. "It means that you said it was easy, and it's the damndest kind of a fool puzzle! I began at the top, as you told me to, and got halfway down. Then, the top got loose, and I began again. I haven't got four hands. Why didn't you come to me? Hello! What are you doing here?"

Two young women, both beautiful, the one an astonished blonde, the other an amazed brunette, stood staring at each other, lips apart, eyes wide open.

"You have forgotten your manners, my daughter," Gwendolen hastened to say, chidingly, giving a splendid rendition of the rôle of a stern parent, shocked at a daughter's lack of self-poise.

"I beg your pardon," cried old Ogden, in a kind of hysterical whistle, "but, you see, I've been up against it all by myself. Your fur—that is, my French maid has gone off with ten dollars to have a pleasant evening—that's enough, don't you think?—and I've been trying to climb into these togs all by myself. I look it, don't I—er—father?"

Richard Ogden's fair caller had managed to make her way to the open door, and now stood glancing from father to daughter, in a hopeless, hunted manner, her bearing wrung dry of all appearance of either self-confidence or anger. She lingered there for a moment, stunned and dazed, but still glorious in her blond beauty.

"May I—may I see you to-morrow, Richard?" she faltered.

Old Ogden, clutching a black gown frantically, realized that for a moment he had lost control of Gwendolen's voice. This was fortunate, for Gwendolen, who began to see a ray of light in the gloom, had the presence of mind to answer quickly, in a benevolent kind of basso:

"Of course, my friend, I shall be glad to see you at any time. Come to my office at noon, to-morrow. I wish to hear, you know, how it happened that he was spared to you "

Then, as the blond stranger disappeared, Gwendolen closed the library door with a bang, and turned frowningly toward a charming society girl, who looked at that moment as if she had been playing college football in a dinner-costume.

"Who is that woman, father? I insist upon knowing who she is!"

Old Ogden giggled as he turned his back to his outward seeming.

"Do up my gown behind, will you, Gwen?" he said, shrilly. "I'm tired of feeling like a remnant. What was that you said to her? Who has been spared to her? What did you mean by that?"

"She thought he was dead," remarked the girl, in her father's dreariest tones; "but he has come back to her."

"Great Scott! You don't mean it! Well, well, well!" piped the old man, excitedly.

"Stand still, will you, father?" grumbled Gwendolen, crossly. "If you don't keep quiet, I'll never get this gown fastened. You look like a fright, and it's getting late. Do you hear me, father? You must keep quiet."

VI

OLD Ogden, in the outward seeming of his daughter, had carried himself very presentably during the earlier courses of the dinner. Gwendolen, as she gazed at herself from the further end of the board, was pleased to realize that nature had endowed her with a beautiful face and a clever father. That fate or electricity or Oriental magic had temporarily brought these two blessings together, depriving her of both of them at the same moment, did not at first tend to lower her spirits. In the rôle of an elderly host, surrounded by young people, she was not called upon to make much of an effort to be sociable, and the stimulating hope grew stronger within her soul, as time went by, that the evening would pass off without any awkward mishap. The Marmaduke Mortimers rattled on in

their usual jolly manner; Teddy Langdon made a feeble jest now and again, endeavoring, between times, to flirt with old Ogden, whose coquettish smile gave Gwendolen an attack of what she grimly called to herself *mal-de-père*. Evelyn de Peyster was the most annoying feature of the evening to the girl. She would insist on talking to Richard Ogden, as she supposed, about matters concerning which Gwendolen knew little or nothing.

"I don't understand the subject at all, Mr. Ogden," Miss de Peyster had remarked, referring to trusts. "Won't you explain to me what you do first? How do you begin to form a trust?"

Gwendolen strove to lower her father's voice to a confidential whisper, as she answered:

"There are several good recipes, Miss de Peyster. But the very first step, of course, is to——"

"You are trying to make Mr. Ogden talk shop, Evelyn," cried Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer, reproachfully. "It's very bad form."

"Listen!" exclaimed old Ogden, putting up a white hand, an expression of mingled fear and hope coming into his daughter's beautiful face. "I thought I heard thunder. Listen!"

"'Twas but the wind or a car rattling o'er the stony street. 'On with the dance!'" quoted Teddy Langdon, flippantly.

"My—daughter is so nervous about thunder-storms," remarked Gwendolen, and her father, had he been listening attentively, might have recognized a note of anger in his own voice as it came to him across the table.

"So am I," confessed Mrs. Mortimer, vivaciously. "And as for Marmaduke, they simply terrorize him."

"What nonsense, my dear," protested Mortimer. "What you take for terror is merely my enthusiasm for noise. I always did love a racket, and thunder just about fills the bill. But as for taking thunder-storms seriously——"

"Just wait until one of the right kind hits you," cried old Ogden, excitedly, at the top of Gwendolen's

voice; "then you'll take it seriously, mark my words."

The diners were gazing at their hysterical young hostess with thinly veiled astonishment.

"My—er—daughter," Gwendolen hastened to explain, in her father's most pompous manner, "has been, from a child, peculiarly flighty when the subject of thunder-storms happened to come up. You must pardon her, my friends. It is, so to speak, hereditary. Her mother and grandmother were both that way."

"It's strange how things like that run through families," commented Teddy Langdon, thoughtfully. "Now, you may not believe it, but I'm afraid of ghosts. It's a Langdon trait. You see, we have a family ghost!"

"What color is it?" piped old Ogden, excitedly, and Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer glanced at Evelyn de Peyster. Could it be possible that Gwendolen Ogden had actually taken too much wine?

"There's been considerable disagreement in the family regarding its color," answered Langdon, with exaggerated seriousness. "There are those who say that it is always white, and others who insist that it is sometimes gray."

"It's never black, is it? Is it ever black?" queried Ogden, in Gwendolen's upper register.

"Who ever heard of a black ghost, Gwendolen?" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer. "They're always white or a light gray."

"Not this season," declared Ogden, emphatically.

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, fearing that her father's excitement would lead him too far.

"Don't chide her, Mr. Ogden," protested Mrs. Mortimer. "Gwendolen is an authority on fashions, you know. If she says that black ghosts are really coming in, it must be so."

There was a gleam of parental defiance in Gwendolen's eyes, as her father glanced at his forbidding face across the board.

"There's a good deal in it," cried

old Ogden, with a sweeping gesture of his daughter's slender hand. "Gwen—that is, father and I saw a black ghost to-day."

"Isn't that exciting! Tell us about it, Mr. Ogden," exclaimed Miss de Peyster, believing that she was smiling at her host.

"My daughter has the floor," remarked Gwendolen, in the basso of despair. "She will tell you the tale."

"You see," went on Richard Ogden, with all his daughter's customary vivacity, "you see, father and I were in the library this afternoon, when a little thunder-storm came up——"

"A thunder-storm!" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer and Teddy Langdon, simultaneously.

"Didn't it, father?" piped Ogden, defiantly. "I'll leave it to my father; if it wasn't a thunder-storm, what was it?"

"You're right, daughter; it was a thunder-storm," growled Gwendolen, reluctantly.

"I am credibly informed," went on the old man, looking very beautiful at the moment, "that the atmospheric disturbance was not general. I have called it a storm. It was really nothing more than a flash and a clap, with, so far as I have been able to ascertain, no rain."

"Curious," commented Marmaduke Mortimer.

"While the storm was at its height," continued the narrator, apparently a charming young woman, bent upon making the most of a good story, "there appeared in the library a tall, patriarchal-looking old man, as black as your hat."

"Did you hear him enter, Miss Ogden?" queried Langdon, eagerly.

"Hear him enter?" shrilly. "Well, rather! He came in with a crash, and went out with a bang. Didn't he, father?"

"He did, indeed," admitted Gwendolen, in a voice that sounded like a groan.

"He came and went in fire and noise," went on her father, inspired by the eager curiosity in the faces of his

guests. "His voice sounded like a terrific explosion."

"He spoke to you, then?" cried Teddy Langdon.

"Gwendolen!" exclaimed Miss Ogden, using her father's voice warningly.

"He talked to us in a language that we didn't understand," answered Mr. Ogden, fibbing in falsetto, much to his daughter's relief.

"How very strange!" murmured Miss de Peyster.

"How did he get away?" asked Mrs. Mortimer. "More fireworks, I suppose."

"It was all so sudden and terrifying," answered Ogden, showing Gwendolen's teeth in a kind of apologetic smile, "that I've forgotten many details of the affair. But, I can assure you that father and I were very glad to have him depart."

"And you couldn't identify the tongue he spoke, Miss Ogden?" queried Langdon, with great solemnity.

"I'm sure that it was Oriental," answered the old man, a note of weariness in Gwendolen's voice. He had grown tired of mingling truth and falsehood for the entertainment of his guests. "Shall we adjourn to the smoking-room for our coffee and liqueur?"

"Do you think it will be safe?" cried Mrs. Mortimer, vivaciously, as she arose from her seat. "Does your black ghost, Gwendolen, confine his visits to the library?"

"I really don't know, my dear Mrs. Mortimer," answered Ogden, with a nervous giggle, as his daughter, limping slightly from a twitch of rheumatism, led the way to the smoking-room. "If he continues to haunt our house, I shall be forced either to get out an injunction, or have our electric batteries taken out."

Mrs. Mortimer glanced at the speaker, in undisguised astonishment. That Gwendolen Ogden was both independent and original she had always known, but that the girl was actually eccentric had come to her this evening as a startling revelation.

Teddy Langdon, as the party crossed

the drawing-room, had managed to take Mrs. Mortimer's place beside, as he supposed, the beautiful Miss Ogden.

"You have not forgotten your promise, Gwendolen?" he murmured, in a voice that had in it a curious mingling of assurance and appeal.

"My memory, sir, is considered very good," said old Ogden, nervously. "But—this promise to which you refer—"

"The wicked little flirt!" remarked Langdon, to himself. Then, making eyes at the girl's flushed face: "We were to have a tête-à-tête after dinner. You gave me your word for that, Gwendolen."

"But I've got to have a smoke," protested the old man, very much in the voice and manner of a spoiled child.

"I didn't know that you had taken to cigarettes, Gwendolen," remarked the youth, coldly. "If you have, of course, I'm done for. You'd rather smoke than talk to me."

Mr. Ogden laughed aloud, hysterically.

"My dear young man," he piped, Gwendolen's face wearing an amused smile, "if you fear tobacco as a rival, I don't see how you can expect to get very far in—er—what shall I call it?—your favorite pursuit."

"What the deuce has happened to the girl?" Langdon asked himself, as they entered the smoking-room. "If I hadn't seen that she didn't touch a drop of wine at dinner, I should actually believe that Gwendolen Ogden had been drinking."

VII

THE smoking-room of Richard Ogden's luxurious home was a fascinating apartment, upon which Gwendolen had exercised much good taste and ingenuity. Her idea at the outset had been to combine gorgeousness with comfort, to make the room both stimulating to the mind and restful to the body. The high colors of the hangings and coverings were blended har-

moniously, and there was no divan or chair in the room not adapted to the comfort of the most indolent of idlers. Hookahs, pipes, cigars, cigarettes and all the miscellaneous paraphernalia that add to a smoker's contentment, were there in profusion. It was in its entirety a splendid shrine, worthy of the great god Tobacco.

"It's like jumping from New York into the Orient, without the discomforts of a journey," remarked Mrs. Mortimer, reclining on a divan, and lazily lighting a cigarette. "Aren't you smoking this evening, Mr. Ogden?" she asked, glancing at Gwendolen, who was moodily weighing the question as to how to avoid her father's customary after-dinner cigar without causing comment.

"It's just the place for a tale from 'The Arabian Nights.' You should have deferred the story of your black ghost, Miss Ogden, until we had settled ourselves in this little corner of the immemorial East," remarked Marmaduke Mortimer, puffing a cigar, and gazing at Mr. Ogden, whose daughter's dark beauty had been enhanced by the rich colorings of his present environment.

"Hark!" cried the old man, thrusting Gwendolen's fair right hand straight upward through a thin cloud of smoke. "Did you hear anything? Listen! Doesn't that sound like distant thunder?"

"How nervous you are to-night, Gwendolen," whispered Teddy Langdon to Mr. Ogden, making eyes at the girl in his most flirtatious way.

"Whose fault is it?" queried the old man, petulantly blowing a cloud of cigarette-smoke from Gwendolen's dainty mouth. "I don't wish to be harsh or unjust toward you, but think of the day I've had. What with that thunder-storm and Jeannette, and—well, never mind her name—and getting dressed, and everything, who wouldn't be nervous? Don't look at me like that, young man. Do you think this is the Eden Musée? I'm not a wax figure, am I?"

"No; you're just the sweetest, most

beautiful, most fascinating, most tantalizing girl in the world, Gwendolen Ogden."

"Sir!" cried the old man, shrilly, tossing his half-finished cigarette into an ash-receiver, and striving ineffectually to get to Gwendolen's feet. But Teddy Langdon, noting that the Marmaduke Mortimers were laughing merrily at something that Evelyn de Peyster had said to Mr. Ogden, as they supposed him to be, was not to be easily deprived of his flirtation.

"I beg of you, Gwendolen," murmured the young man, seizing a fair hand that old Ogden longed to clench; "I beg of you, my dear girl, to be more patient with me. Have you no memory, no pity, no heart? Why should you treat me this way, after all that has happened in the happy, happy past?"

Old Ogden sat motionless, almost overpowered by a thought that changed him from a querulous old man into an amateur actor, or actress, as you choose. He looked at that moment like a handsome, high-bred girl, who had grown somewhat pale in her effort at self-control.

"What has happened in the happy, happy past, Teddy?" whispered the old man.

"Forgive me, Gwendolen, for my words," pleaded the youth, cleverly. "It was my egotism, of course, that made me believe that—that——"

"Believe what, Teddy?" purred Ogden, sweetly.

"That made me believe, Gwendolen, that you were not indifferent to my love for you," explained Langdon, pressing with eloquent fervor the hand he held. "Tell me, have I deceived myself? Is it true, Gwendolen, that you have only been flirting with me; that all you had in mind was another scalp to add to your already overloaded belt?"

"Look here, young man," exclaimed Ogden, in a petulant tone, withdrawing his daughter's hand from Langdon's clasp, "you seem to imply, sir, that my daughter—that—that I am—a heartless coquette, going about

seeking whom I may devour. The idea is shocking to me, sir, in—in my present nervous state. If there is any basis of truth in your accusation, young man— Hark! is that thunder? Listen, Teddy, that's a good boy. Did you hear a kind of distant rumble?"

"My dear girl," murmured Langdon, repentantly, "I'm so sorry that I annoyed you. I should not have said what I did. I was unkind and thoughtless and selfish. I realized at dinner that you were not yourself."

"What's that?" asked Ogden, sharply, an expression of dismay, almost horror, coming into Gwendolen's mobile face. "Not myself? What do you mean by that?"

"How flighty and queer you are to-night, Gwendolen," remarked Langdon, more to himself than to the girl. "Have you ever had an attack of nervous prostration?"

"Well, rather! I've had three attacks to-day; and, if I know the symptoms, I'll have several more before midnight. But, if you think I'm not myself, you're mistaken. Appearances may be deceptive, but I'm I—or I'm me—and there ain't enough electricity between here and Mars to change that fact."

Langdon was obviously puzzled by the girl's words and manner. "That's certainly egotism raised to the *n*th power," he remarked, presently, smiling playfully.

"Take it or leave it," snapped Ogden. "Now, what the dickens does that mean?"

His gaze was fixed apprehensively upon James, the butler, who was crossing the smoking-room at that moment, bearing a note to Gwendolen, who, in the outward seeming of her father, had been playing her rôle to perfection.

"What's this, James?" the girl asked, surprise and resentment in her father's voice. That he had disobeyed a standing order by entering the smoking-room on his present errand the butler realized, but he made his apology calmly.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but the young lady has was 'ere this hafternoon, Mr. Ogden, wouldn't take 'no' for a hanswer. She says has 'ow to-morrow mornin' wouldn't do. She's awaitin' your reply, sir, in the draw-in'-room."

With every eye in the room upon her, Gwendolen broke open the envelope with her father's fat hands. Her old eyes read the following ominous words:

DEAR RICHARD:

Despite your queer treatment of me this afternoon, I have come to you again. I have no one else to whom I can go for advice. He has not only come back from the dead, but he's raising Cain. Excuse the vulgarity of the above, but, if I don't put the case strongly, I know you'll put me off until to-morrow, and there's only one phrase that can describe the way he is acting. I have actually risked my life to come to you at this time. If you are as good a friend of mine as I believe you to be, you will let me have five minutes' talk with you.

Richard Ogden's face had turned white, as Gwendolen perused these enigmatic words. The note trembled in her father's pudgy fingers, and, as she caught the questioning gaze of her own eyes across the room, her agitation increased.

"No bad news, I trust, Mr. Ogden," remarked Mrs. Mortimer, sympathetically.

"Have you had a line from your black ghost?" asked Miss de Peyster, with ill-timed gaiety.

"No; she's a blonde," muttered Gwendolen, to herself, and the joke served to restore to her her self-control. Getting heavily to her father's feet, and with a murmured apology to her guests, she crossed the room, and handed the note to her father, who giggled like a nervous girl as he received it.

"I think you'd better go to her, my daughter," said Gwendolen, in a despondent basso.

"Not on your life!" cried old Ogden, shrilly, after reading the note. "You see her—er—father, and tell her—well, tell her anything!"

"But," protested Gwendolen, in a

gruff whisper, thankful that Langdon had been polite enough to move away, "she's in great trouble, perhaps danger. What shall I say to her? I don't even know her name. She signs herself, 'Emily.'"

"That's right," murmured Ogden, in a subdued voice. "Her name's Emily Prentiss. She's a business client of mine. But it makes me nervous to see her when I'm in this—costume. Just use your wits, Gwendolen—that's a good girl—and go in and talk to her like a father. She wants advice. Give it to her by the yard. Tell her to poison her superfluous husband, or call in the police and have him arrested for not remaining dead. And, my dear, if you think you hear thunder, let me know at once, will you? Thanks; that's a good girl. Now, go. I can't whisper, in your voice, any longer. It makes me too thirsty, Gwen."

With a somewhat incoherent apology to her guests, the girl, feeling old and weary and very rebellious at the cruel fate that had come to her, strode slowly from the smoking-room. It was as if a tall, portly, well-groomed old gentleman, with a pale, heavy face, had turned his back upon Hope to tread the path of Despair.

"Is anything serious the matter, Gwendolen?" asked Teddy Langdon, anxiously, returning, as he believed, to the girl's side. "Your father looked actually crushed."

"You can't crush him, young man," cried old Ogden, in a kind of angry whistle. "I can tell you, sir, that Richard Ogden has been through the most terrible day of his life, and he's still in the ring, and full of ginger. Do you understand me?"

"Frankly, Gwendolen," answered the young man, with a puzzled smile on his face, "frankly, now, I don't believe I do."

VIII

"RICHARD!" cried the beautiful blonde, springing to her feet, and smil-

ing at the old man through eyes wet with tears.

"Mrs. Prentiss," remarked Gwendolen, coldly, "won't you be seated? I have left my guests, in order to grant you this interview. But I must stipulate that you make it very brief."

"How cold and cruel you are, Richard!" moaned Mrs. Prentiss, sinking into a chair in a hopeless way. "You seem to forget, in this the hour of my greatest need, how often you have told me to come to you, if I were in trouble." Then, the speaker seemed fully to recover her self-control, for she sat erect, dried her eyes, and gazed steadily into what she took to be Ogden's pale, set face.

"It is more for your sake than my own that I have come to you, Richard," she said, coldly and distinctly. "He—my husband—has heard gossip—gossip absurdly unjust to you and me, but it has brought him back to New York, and he's a desperate and unprincipled man. At the risk of my life, I have come to warn you that you must be careful of this man. He refuses to believe me when I tell him that you have been a father to me; that, without your counsel and advice, his desertion would eventually have left me without either means or occupation. He ridicules the idea of a platonic friendship between us. And the worst of it is, Richard," she concluded, in a voice that was unsteady with its weight of tears and fears, "the worst of it is that, despite every precaution I could take, I'm sure he followed me here, and is waiting for me outside your door."

"Is he—is he—armed?" asked Gwendolen, her father's voice indicating her horror at the predicament in which a jealous husband had placed herself and others.

"He carries a revolver, and I know it's loaded, Richard," answered Mrs. Prentiss, wearily. "I am so tired! It has been such a frightful day!"

To Gwendolen's distraught mind, it seemed at that moment as if the mingling of farce and tragedy in the situation would drive her to an outbreak of

hysteria. A great rage against Mrs. Prentiss swept over her, and she clenched her father's fists in an effort at self-control. Why should this woman come here with her silly tale of a jealous husband, while she, Gwendolen Ogden, was undergoing an ordeal a thousand times more unbearable than anything that her father's fair client had ever been forced to endure? A frightful day, indeed! A day during which a beautiful, light-hearted girl had lost, at one stroke of fate, her beauty, her light-heartedness, her youth, her health; to receive in their place ugliness, depression of spirits, old age and rheumatism. What was the unexpected return of an unwelcome husband compared with the affliction that had befallen Gwendolen Ogden? Having a jealous husband was infinitely preferable to being one's own father!

But this was no time for vain regrets or unavailing comparisons. Something must be done at once, or crime might follow, fleet of foot, in the track of misfortune. Gwendolen, struggling to keep in mind all the factors of the problem before her, said curtly, in her father's most energetic tones:

"Describe your husband to me, Mrs. Prentiss."

"He is tall, clean-shaven, dark eyes, well-dressed, slightly intoxicated."

Gwendolen touched a button, and, as the butler entered the room, assumed her father's most imperious manner.

"James," she said, "it is possible that within the next half-hour a tall, well-dressed, clean-shaven man, with dark eyes, and—a trifle intoxicated, may call here. If he does, refuse him admission. If he makes the slightest disturbance, threaten to call the police. Do you understand me, James?"

"Very good, sir. Hi'll see to hit, Mr. Ogden."

"And now, Mrs. Prentiss," said Gwendolen, after the butler's exit, rather enjoying, for a moment, the power to take radical action that her father's outward seeming conferred

upon her, "now, I want you to remain here for five minutes. I wish to give further orders in this matter, and shall return to you, presently."

Recrossing the drawing-room as rapidly as her father's portly figure permitted, Gwendolen entered the smoking-room, restraining, by a great effort of will, all outward evidence of her inward turmoil.

"Gwendolen," she said, in Mr. Ogden's most dignified manner, "may I ask you to come with me for a moment? I'm sure that our guests will be lenient in this matter. I shall detain you but a short time, my daughter."

As father and daughter came to a standstill in a far corner of the great drawing-room, the former asked, in Gwendolen's most troubled tones:

"What, in the name of goodness, has happened, girl? Is Emily still here? Couldn't you persuade her to go?"

"Her husband is outside our front door with a gun," groaned Gwendolen. "If she goes out, he'll shoot her. If he gets in, he'll shoot me—thinking I'm you. It's a case of the devil and the deep sea, father."

"Don't call me, 'father.' It's a bad habit, and may make trouble," said Ogden, peevishly. "Confound the man! Why didn't he stay dead? If we telephone for the police, it means publicity; and that's the last thing on earth that you and I wish, my dear. If we keep Emily—I mean Mrs. Prentiss—here, the man's anger will lead him to do something desperate. And the Mortimers and the rest of 'em—how are they going to leave the house without risking their lives? It's a hopeless situation, isn't it? I say, isn't it a hopeless situation?" Then, a thought, that brought a flash of sunshine into Gwendolen's beautiful face, came into the old man's mind. "If I could only persuade that asinine young Langdon to go home now!" he murmured, softly. "There's a fair chance that Prentiss might put a bullet through him, and then run away. That wouldn't be so bad, would it?"

"What are you saying to yourself, my daughter?" asked Gwendolen,

gruffly and impatiently, realizing that there was but little time left to them for choosing their course of procedure.

"Ask Langdon to come here at once, will you?" said the father; and Gwendolen strode heavily toward the smoking-room, astonished at the command, but too agitated mentally to discuss with him the desirability of the step that he was taking.

Teddy Langdon, as he crossed the drawing-room in step, as he supposed, with Mr. Ogden, was struck by the look of worry and depression in Gwendolen's face as the head of the house greeted them with a wan smile.

"If I were in sore trouble and great danger, Teddy Langdon, what would you be willing to do for me?" cooed Ogden, making eyes at the young man in a way that filled Gwendolen's soul with impotent rage.

"Anything—everything, Gwendolen," answered the youth, bravely and emphatically. "You are in trouble; you need my help; my life is at your disposal, Gwendolen. What can I do for you?"

"Listen attentively, my—er—dear boy," went on Ogden, in his daughter's sweetest tones. "There's a tall, dark, smooth-shaven, intoxicated man outside the house, with a gun. He's anxious to put a bullet through dear papa. Now, if somebody could persuade him that dear papa is not—that kind of a man, you know—that is, that dear papa doesn't desire to be shot, don't you see—er—Teddy, how nice that would be?"

Young Langdon had grown white around the mouth, but his eyes were steady as he gazed fondly into Gwendolen's flushed face, and said:

"If you ask me to speak to the fellow, Gwendolen, it will give me great pleasure to do as you wish." Then, he turned to Mr. Ogden's outward seeming, and asked:

"Have you ever seen this man, sir? Is he a very desperate character?"

Gwendolen was too much torn by conflicting emotions to answer at once. She realized that it was not fair to force Teddy Langdon to risk his life

in this affair. On the other hand, it might be that there was no great danger, after all. Why should Mr. Prentiss shoot a stranger, against whom he could have no grudge, simply because that stranger had been a guest of Richard Ogden? And, if Teddy Langdon did not make the attempt to drive this desperate man away for the night, who was there left upon whom they could call? Marmaduke Mortimer was a great gossip, and James, the butler, a great coward. To summon the police meant publicity. By a process of elimination, Gwendolen was forced to the conclusion that Teddy Langdon had become their only hope at this complicated, but very threatening, crisis.

"I have never seen this person, Mr. Langdon," she said, presently, "but I have reason to believe that he's a very bad man. You mustn't leave the house without a revolver. Just wait here a moment. There's a six-shooter in the library. I'll get it for you, and return here at once."

Before Ogden could attempt to check his daughter's impetuosity, she had carried his portly form half-way across the drawing-room, hurrying toward the library.

"Are you going to faint, Gwendolen?" cried Langdon, springing as he supposed, toward the girl.

"If I could have just one little high-ball, I think I could stand the strain," giggled the old man, nervously. "Tell James to come here, will you, Teddy? That's a good boy," he cooed, sinking into a chair, as Langdon, puzzled and distraught, hurried across the room in search of the butler.

IX

"RICHARD! Richard! you have come back to me? How glad I am!"

As Gwendolen hurriedly entered the library, Mrs. Prentiss sprang to her feet, her pale, clear-cut face showing the relief she felt at the old man's return.

"I'll be with you only a moment," remarked the girl, in the gruffest tones. "Sit down again, and keep perfectly cool, Mrs. Prentiss."

"Cool!" exclaimed the beautiful woman, rather tartly, falling back into her chair. "You're cool enough for both of us, Richard. You're like ice. What are you looking for?"

Gwendolen, to whom her father's hands were still a kind of clumsy mystery, was fumbling awkwardly with a miscellaneous collection of odds and ends that had come together in the drawer of the library-table. Presently, she found the revolver that she sought, and clasped it with fat fingers that trembled slightly.

Mrs. Prentiss, who had been watching the old man closely, was on her feet again at once, and, presently, Gwendolen felt the clutch of a slender, nervous hand on her father's arm.

"What are you going to do with that pistol, Richard?" whispered Mrs. Prentiss, her big blue eyes gazing down in affright at the gleaming weapon. "Put it back where you found it, I implore you! You'll only make matters worse, if you go hunting for Tom. He's a dead shot, Richard. He's a Kentuckian, you remember."

Gwendolen drew away from the pale and excited speaker, and dropped, rather limply, into a chair, holding the revolver gingerly at her side. She felt faint and hopeless. What chance would Teddy Langdon have against an armed Kentuckian under the influence of whiskey?

"Richard, I insist upon knowing what you have in mind," remarked Mrs. Prentiss, a stubborn note in her voice. "If I came to you for shelter and protection, I certainly had no intention of allowing you to put your life in jeopardy. You must not leave this room with that revolver in your hand."

This was too much for Gwendolen's patience, and she arose clumsily to her father's feet. Rather easily coaxed, the girl—an only child, be it remembered—had never been amenable to

coercion. Opposition had always made her stubborn, and, in this instance, the lack of tact displayed by Mrs. Prentiss intensified Gwendolen's natural inclination to have her own way.

"I must leave this room, revolver in hand, at once," remarked the girl. "If somebody gets hurt within the next few moments, it won't be my fault. And Teddy, so far as I know to the contrary, may be a crack shot," she added, half to herself.

"Teddy?" queried Mrs. Prentiss, excitedly. "Who's he?"

Gwendolen paused in her movement toward the door.

"Mr. Langdon has volunteered to confront Mr. Prentiss, and persuade him to take his departure peaceably," she explained, gruffly.

"Teddy Langdon!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, white to the lips. "Good heavens, Richard, he and Tom must not meet! There will be murder done, if they come face to face to-night with revolvers in hand. If I had known that Teddy Langdon was here——"

The sentence remained unfinished.

"What do you know about Teddy Langdon?" asked Gwendolen, in her father's most imperious tones.

Mrs. Prentiss shrugged her shoulders, and smiled.

"I know that he and Tom have a grudge against each other," she answered, vaguely.

"You seem to have a very wide acquaintance, Mrs. Prentiss," remarked Gwendolen, with the manner and voice of an old man made cruel by jealousy.

"Richard!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, reproachfully. "Is it kind of you to choose such a time as this for sarcasm, or worse? Is there—pardon the egotism of the question—is there a good-looking woman in New York who doesn't know Teddy Langdon?"

"H'm!" growled Gwendolen. "Well, he's a man worth knowing, isn't he? He may be soft in spots, but he has courage. I'm inclined to believe that he has the sand to go

out and put a hole through S. T." There was a suspicion of hysteria in the old man's voice as Gwendolen said this.

"S. T.?" queried Mrs. Prentiss, nervously.

"Superfluous Tom," explained the girl, curtly. "Do you imagine, Mrs. Prentiss, that the present situation can be allowed to last an hour longer? As I understand it, we are besieged in our own house by an intoxicated Kentuckian who knows how to shoot to kill. What chance would I stand if I went out to talk to your husband? But it is more than possible that Mr. Prentiss will be willing to hold a peaceful parley with Mr. Langdon."

"Parley with Teddy Langdon?" cried Mrs. Prentiss, rather wildly. "You don't know Tom. He didn't understand how to argue, even when we were first married. He's the most unreasonable man that ever lived, and, as for his holding a debate with Teddy Langdon, that's absurd. The only arguments he'll use are made of lead." There was a sob in the speaker's voice and tears in her fine eyes as she added: "I beg of you, Richard, not to give that revolver to Mr. Langdon."

At that moment, the library was invaded by a flighty young woman, talking in a shrill falsetto and followed closely by a white-faced young man, who was vainly endeavoring to conceal his inward agitation.

"You must have something to steady your nerves, young Langdon," Ogden was saying, emphatically. "What has become of James, I don't know. But never mind. There's something besides books in this room, my boy. Great Scott, what's all this? Emily! Gwen—or, rather, father, where did you get that gun? For heaven's sake, keep it quiet, will you? It'll go off, if you aren't careful. The thing's loaded, don't you know?"

"Don't be so nervous, my daughter," growled Gwendolen, annoyed at her father's excited bearing. "Here, Mr. Langdon, take this revolver. You may find it useful later on."

"Don't you touch the infernal thing, Teddy," piped Ogden, after the manner of a spoiled child, waving Gwendolen's hands wildly in the air. "If you take that pistol from father, I won't give you a high-ball. So there, now!"

"But, Gwendolen," argued his daughter, still thrusting the weapon toward the reluctant Langdon, "he mustn't go into the street unarmed. This Mr. Prentiss is a bad man from Kentucky, and he has been drinking. I'm sorry I haven't a Gatling gun to give you, Mr. Langdon."

"Take the pistol, Teddy," cried Ogden, excitedly. "Anything for a quiet life!"

"And now," he went on, with great animation, handling Gwendolen's skirts with considerable skill as he tripped toward the locker, "now we'll fortify our brave defender against the insidious inroads of the white feather. Cartridge and ball, eh, Langdon?"

With surprising deftness, Mr. Ogden placed the ingredients for a stimulating mixture upon the library-table, the while his companions watched him silently, admiring the young girl's grace and beauty, but not altogether pleased with her occupation.

"Strike her up!" piped old Ogden, presently, pointing with Gwendolen's dainty hand toward a bottle of Scotch and a siphon of vichy. "Strike her up! High-ball!" Then, he giggled hysterically at his own facetiousness.

Langdon, nothing loath, poured out his drink.

"And now, Emily—I mean, Mrs. Prentiss, may I—?" began Mr. Ogden, glancing with his daughter's sad, dark eyes at the beautiful blonde.

Before Mrs. Prentiss could put her refusal of this eccentric young woman's invitation into words, James, the butler, pale and overwrought, had rushed into the library.

"E's in the 'all, sir," he gasped, gazing at Gwendolen, thinking that he addressed his master. "'Ow 'e got hin, Mr. Ogden, I cawn't say. But 'e's there, and 'e says as 'ow 'e must see you hat once, sir."

"To whom do you refer, James?" asked the girl.

"The tall, dark man as 'as been walkin' hup and down hin front of the 'ouse, sir, for an hour. 'E's very gentlemanly, Mr. Ogden, but, hif hi may take the liberty, 'e 'as been drinking, sir."

"Put him out of the house, James!" ordered Gwendolen, curtly, waving her father's fat hand toward the hall. "If he won't go quietly, you'll be obliged to throw him out."

"That won't do at all, father," cried Ogden, shrilly, leaning back in a chair and kicking nervously at the air with his daughter's dainty feet. "A good butler is hard to find in these days, and James is very satisfactory."

"Thank you, miss," said James, gratefully. "Hif you'll hexcuse my hegotism, so to speak, sir," he added, turning, as he supposed, toward Mr. Ogden, "hi'm not fit to die, sir."

"And I don't dare to go to him!" remarked Mrs. Prentiss, apologetically, but with emphasis.

"He'd shoot me on sight, of course," mused Gwendolen, in melancholy tones.

"It's up to me, I guess," admitted Teddy Langdon, not very cheerfully.

Suddenly, Gwendolen was struck by an inspiration. She stood erect, her father's face flushed, and a note of excitement in his voice, as she said:

"There seems to be but one person in the room who can confront this dangerous intruder in perfect safety. Wild though he may be, he is, in a way, a gentleman. I have no doubt that—my daughter could go to him with impunity. I suggest, my dear Gwendolen, that you step into the hall at once, and request this Mr. Prentiss to depart in peace."

"Me?" exclaimed old Ogden, in a startled whistle, that suggested a young girl attacked by asthma and hysteria at the same moment. "What do you think of that, Emily? Thomas wouldn't do a thing to me, would he?"

"You forget yourself, my daughter," remarked Gwendolen, in a deep, child-

ing voice. "I am amazed at you, my child. Where do you pick up so much slang?"

"That's neither here nor there," answered her father, in a sulky falsetto. Then, it came to him, clearly enough, that in Gwendolen's outward seeming he would be in no great danger from Mr. Prentiss. Springing to his dainty feet, and waving his white hands in the air with a gesture that had become a habit with him, the old man cried:

"Come on, Teddy! We'll face this bold, bad man, and ask him sternly why he didn't stay dead. I'll buy thy flowers, Tommy Prentiss! Come on, Teddy! I'll lead the charge, and you come up on my left flank with the light artillery. Confound these skirts! They're an awful nuisance to heavy infantry going into action. Attention, company! Forward, march! Charge!"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, sternly; but it was too late to restrain the reckless old man, who was hurrying toward the hall, followed by Teddy Langdon.

"Are you going to faint, Richard? You look very pale," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, approaching Gwendolen, solicitously.

"Don't mind me," growled the girl, despairingly. Then, she thrust a pudgy hand straight into the air. "Listen!" she groaned, apprehensively. "Listen!"

X

"Isn't it horrible, Richard? What do you think will happen?"

"Listen!" groaned Gwendolen, gazing down hopelessly at her father's large feet. "If anything awful happens, Mrs. Prentiss, I shall never forgive myself. I should always feel like a parricide."

"A 'parricide,' Richard?" cried Mr. Ogden's beautiful client, with a nervous little laugh. "I had always believed that you were an orphan."

"I am," growled Gwendolen, recollecting herself, or, rather, her father.

"Sit down! You make me nervous. What are you doing here, James?"

From a far corner of the library, within which he had vainly sought to escape observation, issued the butler—a withered flower, a collapsed balloon, no longer either ornamental or useful. Even his beautiful calves seemed to have shrunk in his effort to avoid notice. His cheeks and lips were white, his eyes restless, his haughty, self-confident bearing nothing but a memory of his splendid past.

"Are you ill, James?" asked Gwendolen, in the stateliest manner.

"Hif you'll permit me to say so, Mr. Ogden," faltered the butler, "hi'm not hup to much, sir. This 'as been a wery exhausting day, sir."

"Go to the hall at once, James," ordered Gwendolen, sharply. "You may be needed there at any moment."

As the collapsed flunkey left the library with reluctant tread, Mrs. Prentiss watched his retreating figure, smilingly.

"You really can't blame him, Richard," she remarked, very justly, "for his unwillingness to return to his duties."

"I don't blame him," growled the girl, annoyed at the realization that she was inclined to lose her temper. "Upon what did you base your accusation, Mrs. Prentiss? What made you imply that I blamed him?"

"You are so queer to-night, Richard," remarked old Ogden's caller, restlessly. "Frankly, I don't feel at ease with you. You haven't been at all like yourself to-day. Won't you tell me, Richard, what's the matter with you?"

"Listen!" exclaimed Gwendolen, in a hoarse whisper. "Do you hear voices?"

"Not a sound, Richard," answered Mrs. Prentiss, presently. "The house is absolutely quiet."

"But there must be something doing," argued the girl, glaring down, with angry eyes, at her father's pudgy hands. "It isn't likely that Teddy Langdon and—my daughter,

are attempting to reform your husband by silent prayer."

"The suspense is awful," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, nervously, jumping to her feet and impulsively drawing near, as she supposed, to Mr. Ogden, a frightened woman craving a man's protection.

"Isn't there something more to be done, Richard?" Her hand rested appealingly upon the old man's shoulder, and Gwendolen allowed it to remain there, too worried and distraught to resent a liberty taken by a comparative stranger.

At that instant, Evelyn de Peyster, closely followed by the Marmaduke Mortimers, hurriedly entered the library.

"I—I beg your pardon," faltered Miss de Peyster, blushing with embarrassment.

"We owe you an apology, Mr. Ogden," said Mr. Mortimer, stepping forward in an effort to relieve the situation, "but it is getting late, and we decided to—to—"

"To take time by the forelock," added Mrs. Mortimer, with great presence of mind. "And we seem to have succeeded in doing it," she murmured, under her breath. Her keen eyes had noted the siphon of vichy and the bottle of whiskey on the table.

Gwendolen, realizing that her father's rheumatism was growing worse, had managed to stand erect, striving to regain sufficient courage to confront this unexpected crisis with the boldness that alone could deprive the situation of its unbearable awkwardness. To this end, she unconsciously exaggerated her father's most pompous manner.

"You are mistaken, Mr. Mortimer," she said, in a very impressive basso. "The apology is due, not from you to me, but from me to you. You will permit me, I trust, to explain. But, first, Mrs. Mortimer, Miss de Peyster and Mr. Mortimer, allow me to present you to Mrs. Prentiss, a client of mine who has been forced to come to me to-night for advice and protection."

"Delighted!" murmured Miss de Peyster, sarcastically.

"Charmed!" cried Mr. Mortimer, glancing admiringly at the beautiful Mrs. Prentiss.

"I congratulate you, madame," remarked Mrs. Mortimer, suavely, "upon your choice of a counselor. Mr. Ogden's advice is always of the best."

"Hark! what's that?" exclaimed Gwendolen, hoarsely.

"Look here, Ogden," cried Marmaduke Mortimer, "you're in trouble. We're not merely your guests of an evening—we're old friends, entitled to your confidence. Why won't you be frank with us? If we can be of any use to you at this time, you should not hesitate to enlist our services, old man."

"You are very kind, Mortimer," Gwendolen managed to say, gratefully. "If you'll seat yourselves here in the library for a few moments, you will do me a favor. I'll explain the whole affair to you, presently. Meanwhile, if you'll postpone your departure for a time, I shall be under great obligations to you."

There came the sound of swishing skirts from the drawing-room, and a white-faced, dark-haired girl rushed into the library, slamming the door behind her, and turning the key in the lock.

"Saved!" cried old Ogden, in hysterical falsetto, waving Gwendolen's hands triumphantly in the air, as he leaned against the closed door, in appearance a frightened maiden beginning to smile as the realization became clear that a place of safety had been reached. "Your Tom, Emily," he went on, shrilly, "is about the worst that ever happened. I don't blame you for running away from him. He's the——"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, in a deep, chiding basso. "Gwendolen, you forget yourself!"

"Hark!" piped Ogden, hysterically; "is that thunder? Did any of you hear thunder?"

"Gwendolen!" repeated the girl, limping toward her father.

"Drop it, will you?" cried the old man, in his daughter's most petulant tone. "I've reached the limit, here and now!" With that, he seized his skirts, and tripped hastily toward the library-table, unconscious of, or indifferent to, the glances of amazement cast upon him.

"Just two fingers, with lots of fizz-water," he babbled, girlishly, deftly mixing the stimulant.

"Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble
Disappear with a high-ball double,"

he piped, gaily, showing Gwendolen's beautiful teeth to his astounded guests, as he replaced the long glass, empty, upon the table. Then, he flopped into a chair, and tossed a dainty little foot into the air.

"Now, let's hold a council of war, my friends," he cried, in dulcet tones. "Isn't it gratifying, Gwen—I mean, father—how well that high-ball acts? But it's been such a trying day, don't you know! Hey, there, Mortimer, where are you going? Don't you unlock that door, or I'll cut you off my list. That wild-eyed Kentuckian is roaming around the house looking for game. If he gets in here, he'll fill his bag. I'm inclined to think," added the old man, with a girlish giggle, "that he has dropped James, by this time."

"I'm astonished at you, Gwendolen," said his daughter, in the gruffest voice she could control. "Listen to me: What has happened to Teddy Langdon?"

Her father gave vent to a weird peal of hysterical laughter.

"Teddy!" he cried, shrilly. "He was the funniest sight I ever saw! He climbed through a front window, and dropped into the street. He's running still, I suppose. I tell you, Emily, your Kentucky spouse is a dandy. He has an eloquent way of handling a six-shooter that makes you think of a story by Bret Harte. But I wish he were out of the house. We'll have to spend the night here, I fear. And I can't sleep in these infernal skirts, confound 'em! Hark! was that

thunder? Did anybody hear thunder?"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, both anger and appeal in her gruff tones.

"What does all this mean, Ogden?" exclaimed Marmaduke Mortimer, whose patience had begun to show signs of exhaustion. "Your daughter seems to be—well, hysterical; and you, if you'll pardon my saying so, don't act like yourself. May we not—Miss de Peyster, Mrs. Mortimer and myself—ask the privilege of taking our departure at once?"

"Don't go!" cried Ogden, frantically. "You may think that my daughter—that is, that I'm hysterical; but you're doing me a rank injustice. I am calm. I may not look it, I may not sound it, but I tell you, Marmy, I am calm! Talk about hysteria! You should have seen Teddy Langdon. But I am calm. I have been calm through it all. I might have followed Teddy through the window. I was tempted to. But I remained cool; I recalled my costume. I was calm. I am calm. I shall be calm. Great Scott, what's that?"

A loud, sharp rapping upon the library door echoed with threatening insistence through the room. Old Ogden sank supinely into a chair.

"Speak to him, Emily!" he piped, imploringly, gazing at Mrs. Prentiss. "Tell your Tommy to be calm, will you? Speak to him, for heaven's sake! He'll put a bullet through the keyhole in another minute, if you don't tell him to be calm. Do you hear me, Emily? Speak to him!"

XI

THE Marmaduke Mortimers and Evelyn de Peyster had begun to realize that they had become more or less involved in a mysterious drama, whose plot and *dramatis personæ* had not yet become clearly defined to their startled eyes. The play, in so far as they could follow it, seemed to be a curious mixture of farce, light comedy and heavy tragedy.

The ominous rapping upon the library door had been thrice repeated before Gwendolen, in outward seeming a weary old man at his wits' end, had seen fit to reply to the impatient summons.

"Who's there?" she finally called out, in a basso that had in it a note of anger.

"With your permission, sir," came back the butler's voice, "the electrical hexpert 'as returned, Mr. Ogden, and 'e says has 'ow 'e's 'ere by hap'pointment."

Old Ogden had sprung to Gwendolen's feet in a state of great excitement. He looked, at that moment, like a beautiful young woman in a high fever.

"Saved!" he cried, in a jubilant treble. "The best butler in New York has escaped the murderous bullets of a bad man from Kentucky!" Tripping hurriedly toward the door, his skirts grasped by one hand while he waved the other in the air, the old man, showing his daughter's teeth in a glad and winsome smile, said, merrily:

"What's become of the man behind the gun, James?"

"With your permission, Miss Ogden, hi've got 'im locked up in the wine-closet. You see, miss, hi bein' the butler, and 'e bein' thirsty, so to speak, hit wasn't difficult to cage 'im."

"Hoop-la!" shouted Ogden, shrilly. "How's that, Emily? Your Tommy locked up in my wine-closet! It'll come high, I guess, before we get him out of there. But he ought to make a night of it on half-a-dozen bottles, don't you think?"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, despair and protest striking the lowest note of the old man's register. Unlocking the door, she said to the butler, whose face was flushed with excitement and triumph, "Ask the electrician if he will kindly wait until we are at leisure, James. Show him into the smoking-room. I'll be with him, presently."

"That's another one on me," grumbled Ogden. "One total stranger has got the run of my wine, and another is to have free access to my cigars! I'm

glad I didn't give that little French fire-cracker that other ten-dollar bill."

"And now, Richard Ogden," remarked Marmaduke Mortimer, coldly, imagining that he approached his host, "and now, sir, I take it that we are at liberty to depart." Gwendolen smiled, politely.

"Don't go, Marmy," Ogden begged, seizing Mr. Mortimer's hands with Gwendolen's fingers. "It's just the shank of the evening. Let's make a night of it! We've got Mr. Tommyrot, of Kentucky, locked up in the wine-closet, so there's really no immediate danger. If Mrs. Mortimer——"

"Really, Miss Ogden," remarked Mr. Mortimer, coldly, withdrawing his hands from what seemed to be a young girl's unconventional grasp, "we couldn't think of remaining a moment longer."

"No, Gwendolen, dear," put in Mrs. Mortimer, unable to disguise her annoyance, "we must go at once. And you should retire as soon as possible, my dear girl. You need sleep, badly."

"Sleep!" cried a stunningly handsome brunette, with an old man's dread of insomnia. "How could I sleep with that explosive Enoch Arden locked up in the wine-closet? No, we'll have to make a night of it. If you must go, you'll lose more fun than you've had this season. I shall remain up, and father will chaperon me; won't you, papa? And I'm sure that Mrs. Prentiss will be kind enough to keep us company. Her Tommy will be perfectly harmless inside of half an hour. You see, a Kentuckian always carries a corkscrew."

"Good night, Gwendolen," said Miss de Peyster, sadly, gazing with reproachful eyes at her friend's flushed face. "It has been such a charming evening," she added as she followed the Mortimers from the library.

"I don't like that de Peyster girl," remarked Ogden, turning toward his daughter, who had been saying farewell to the departing guests. "She's sarcastic. But now, Emily—that is, Mrs. Prentiss, and father, let us sit down, and calmly discuss the situation.

I'm inclined to think that a very weak high-ball——"

"Not another drop, Gwendolen!" protested his daughter, sinking wearily into a chair, and crossing her father's legs with considerable difficulty. "Won't you be seated, Mrs. Prentiss? Your advice at this crisis will be of great value to us."

"I really fear, Richard," remarked Ogden's fair client, sighing deeply as she seated herself, "that my mind is in too much of a whirl to offer any counsel of value."

"Hark!" cried Ogden, who had also dropped into a chair. "Hark! what's that? It sounds to me like distant thunder."

"You deceive yourself, Gwendolen," growled his daughter, in the voice of a petulant old man. "Now, my advice is this: Let us dismiss the electrician, keep the Kentuckian locked up for the night, and have James escort Mr. Prentiss to her home. In that way, my daughter, you and I could get some sleep."

"I told you I couldn't sleep," commented her father, with the voice and manner of a belle that was out of tune. "But, daddy, go to bed at once, if you feel so disposed. Em—that is, Mrs. Prentiss and I will sit with the remains, so to speak."

Mrs. Prentiss was gazing at the speaker with puzzled eyes. She had no desire to keep watch and ward with a young woman who seemed to be, to put it mildly, in a very flighty state of mind.

"Listen!" cried old Ogden, shrilly; "whose voices do I hear? Have those infernal Mortimers returned? What does this mean?"

The overwrought trio were on their feet, gazing apprehensively at the library door.

"Hif you please, Mr. Ogden——" began the butler, nervously, as he hurried into the room. But he got no further, for, close upon his heels, came a man with a woman clinging to his arm.

"Teddy Langdon!" whistled Ogden, merrily.

"Jeannette!" exclaimed Gwendolen, in a kind of amazed groan.

"You see—" began Langdon, apologetically.

"Oh, we see, all right!" cried Mr. Ogden, at the top of Gwendolen's voice. "You've had a large evening, haven't you, Jeannette? Last name doesn't matter. Ten dollars was enough, wasn't it?"

"Oh, *mam'selle! Pardonnez-moi! Je suis très triste. Mais—*"

"You see," recommenced Langdon, gazing appealingly at Miss Ogden, as he mistakenly imagined, "you see, your maid had made a mistake in the street. She was a ship sinking within sight of land."

"Beautiful smile!" exclaimed Ogden, in an enthusiastic treble. "Ten dollars more, and she'd never have seen land. But it's all right, Jeannette! This is the night we celebrate, anyway. We'll all have one little high-ball apiece, eh?"

"*Non! non, mam'selle!*" cried the French girl, horror-stricken or remorseful, it was hard to say which.

"Gwendolen," commanded Ogden's daughter, sternly, "dismiss your maid at once. Don't go, Mr. Langdon. We may need your assistance, presently."

There was a stubborn note in the old man's borrowed falsetto as he said:

"Jeannette isn't sleepy, are you, Jeannette? Be a good girl, now, and you may stay up until the show is over. We're running a continuous performance here to-day, and I'm sure that, with your artistic temperament, you'll appreciate— Hark! what's that? Listen! Oh, it's you again, James! What's the matter now?"

"Hi'm sorry to say, Mr. Ogden," said the butler, ignoring the speaker and addressing Gwendolen, "hi'm sorry to say, sir, that there's a policeman in the 'all. 'E wants to know what's wrong 'ere, sir. 'E says as 'ow 'e saw a man jump out of a front window 'ere, and 'e overheard Mr. Marmaduke Mortimer saying, has 'e got hinto 'is coupé, that there was at

least three crazy people in this 'ere 'ouse, Mr. Ogden."

"That's your fault, Teddy Langdon," cried old Ogden, angrily. "You were scared too easily. Didn't you know that the man behind the gun was loaded?"

"Gwendolen!" exclaimed his daughter, protestingly. Then, with her father's sternest manner, she turned to the butler. "Ask the officer to come to us here, will you, James? I wish to speak to him."

"Wery good, Mr. Ogden," replied James, hurrying away.

"What in the world did you do that for, my daughter?" cried Ogden, tempestuously. "Aren't we in trouble enough, as it is, without calling in the police?"

"I wish to have him remove that man from the wine-closet," remarked the girl, with gruff energy, setting her father's jaw, stubbornly.

"Oh, Richard!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, springing forward in alarm. "You must not do this! You mustn't have Tom arrested! I couldn't endure the publicity of it. I beg of you, Richard, be merciful!"

At that instant, the butler, followed closely by a blue-coated patrolman, appeared at the library door.

XII

"WHAT'S wrong here, Mr. Ogden?" asked the policeman, eying the group in the library, with the cold gaze of a man to whom astonishment is impossible.

"You are," answered Gwendolen, gruffly.

"That's one on you, officer," cried Ogden, gleefully. "And—er—my father's quite right. When we need you, we'll send for you."

"My duty's my duty, miss," commented the officer, unwilling to offend the influential Mr. Ogden and his daughter, but anxious to solve the mystery of this disturbed household.

"It's your duty to tend to crime and criminals, officer," remarked Mr.

Ogden, dropping into a chair, and making an oratorical gesture. "We've had a trying day, but there has been no lawlessness. Jeannette has had a large evening, and I'm not quite myself, but there's no reason why the police should enter the house."

"Beg pardon, miss," remarked the patrolman, deferentially, "but a man left your house recently through a front window. You can't blame me for not liking the look of it."

"The look of it!" repeated old Ogden, in a merry treble. "It was the funniest sight I ever saw!"

"You see, officer," Gwendolen hastened to say, "we were playing a round game after dinner, and one of our guests jumped through the window in his excitement."

The policeman bowed, muttered something that sounded apologetic, and retreated across the drawing-room, followed by James.

"Hi'm sorry, sir, that you've been put to so much unnecessary trouble, so to speak," remarked the latter, as they neared the front door.

"You'd be surprised, young man," said the patrolman, impressively, delaying his exit for a moment, "you'd be surprised to know what queer things I do see since the nobs took to playin' ping-pong. Good night."

"And now that it's all quiet on the Potomac, my friends," said Ogden, merrily, after the policeman's disappearance, "I suggest——"

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, warningly.

"I suggest," continued her father, stubbornly, "that we adjourn to the dining-room for a Welsh rabbit and beer."

"Clever idea, Gwendolen," murmured Teddy Langdon, in the old man's tiny ear. "But can't we have a moment alone together, before I go?"

"Sir!" exclaimed the old man. "I really wish—er—young Langdon, that you'd confine your goo-goo talk to—Jeannette, for instance. Ah, here's James back in the nick of time. James, we're going to the dining-

room at once for beer and rabbit. Get everything ready for us."

"Have you forgotten the electrician?" he heard his own voice muttering, in a clumsy whisper.

"I forget nothing," answered the old man. "The table will just balance. Teddy Langdon and Jeannette, you and Mrs. Prentiss, and the electrician and myself. We'll make a night of it, and watch the weather. We may have a thunder-storm before morning, you know."

"But, Jeannette—" protested Gwendolen, in her father's haughtiest tones, subdued but significant.

"She's in the swim to-night all right," whispered the old man, hospitably. "To-morrow morning, I'll snub her to beat the band," he added, soothingly.

As Teddy Langdon, ten minutes later, glanced at the group that had gathered, with forced merriment, around the table, he realized that he was a snob. But he was compelled to admit to himself, presently, that Jeannette possessed a piquant charm, and that the electrician looked and acted like a gentleman.

The only one of the party who was at first frankly and unaffectedly merry was old Ogden. He displayed Gwendolen's stunning teeth in joyous smiles, while her dark eyes danced with delight when he realized that James had made a most eatable rabbit. His complete freedom from rheumatism for many hours had given a zest to life that he had not felt for years.

"Don't look so down-hearted, father," he cried to Gwendolen, after quaffing a stein of beer. "Did you enjoy the evening, Jeannette? Did you blow yourself?"

"Oui, *mam'selle*," answered the French girl, her black eyes bright with many varied emotions.

"It was a great blow," whispered Langdon to old Ogden, wondering what kind of a wife this fascinating, but eccentric, Gwendolen Ogden was likely to make.

"Do you think, Richard, that Tom

has gone to sleep in the wine-closet?" whispered Mrs. Prentiss to her vis-à-vis.

"I hope he has," she heard an old man answer, wearily. Life had become almost unendurable to Gwendolen Ogden. Her old bones ached, and she craved sleep. "If we ever become readjusted," she found herself repeatedly thinking, "I'll be more considerate of poor father's feelings. He has so much more to endure than I had imagined."

"Is Tom fond of rabbits, Em—I mean, Mrs. Prentiss?" cried old Ogden, hospitably. "It seems too bad to keep him locked up all night, if he's really hungry."

"Ees mam'selle not vare beautiful to-night?" whispered Jeannette in Langdon's ear.

"I'm sure," remarked the latter, addressing Gwendolen, as he supposed, "I'm sure that it would be too bad to have the man starve to death. We might have him in here for a few moments."

"But, Mr. Langdon," remarked Gwendolen, in her father's most sarcastic tones, "James has locked all the windows for the night."

"That's not fair, daughter," protested Mr. Ogden, somewhat hysterically. "It is true that Teddy ran away under fire. But, like Cato, or Catiline, or the cat—he came back. Now, fill your glasses, friends, Romans, countrymen! I am about to propose a toast."

"Gwendolen!" cried his daughter, apprehensively.

"It's all right, father," the old man assured her. "Here's the toast—with apologies to Em—Mrs. Prentiss:

"There was a young man from Kentucky,
Who went on a hunt for his ducky;
But he didn't his worst
Because of his thirst,
And that was exceedingly lucky."

Even Mrs. Prentiss could not refrain from laughing at the eccentric Miss Ogden's doggerel. Upon the thin, alert face of the electrical expert rested an expression of astonishment that convinced Langdon that the man was not

really a thoroughbred. Langdon was inclined to be hypercritical and super-sensitive at this moment. His courage was under suspicion, and Gwendolen Ogden had been openly sarcastic regarding his recent escapade. He must redeem himself in the eyes of the girl and the others.

"With your permission, Mr. Ogden," said Langdon, getting to his feet and ostentatiously removing a revolver from his hip-pocket and laying it upon the table, "with your permission, sir, I shall enter the wine-closet, and find out just how this very amusing Kentuckian feels at present. I shall go unarmed."

"Bravo!" cried old Ogden, enthusiastically. "But watch out, Daniel. Lions bite, you know."

"*Non, non, monsieur!*" exclaimed Jeannette, very prettily. "*C'est magnifique mais il n'est pas la guerre. Restez tranquille, s'il vous plaît.*"

"Don't go, Teddy," pleaded Gwendolen, in the most impressive tones.

"I beg of you, Mr. Langdon," cried Mrs. Prentiss, turning her pale face beseechingly up to the rash youth; "I beg of you not to enter the wine-closet. It means deadly peril to you, if you do."

"Don't get scared, Teddy," old Ogden hastened to say, his daughter's face radiant with approving smiles. "Let the wine-closet, my boy, atone for the front window. Have you any last words to leave to us? You are young to die, but, of course, you couldn't go through life with a stain upon your reputation for courage; now, could you?"

Seemingly a target for the bitter gibes of a beautiful young woman, with whom he had fallen deeply in love, Teddy Langdon was a truly tragic figure as he stood there, pale but determined, poised upon the brink.

"There is a stain upon my reputation for courage," he said, coolly, "and it must be wiped out. If I tell you that I jumped through the window to intercept the Kentuckian, thinking that he intended to bolt through the front door, you would laugh at me, Miss

Ogden, and the rest of you would doubt my word. But, if I enter the wine-closet unarmed, I think that no one afterward could have the audacity to call me a coward."

"Isn't that beautiful?" cried old Ogden, in enthusiastic falsetto, waving a lily-white hand in the air. "Behold King Arthur's round table, groaning beneath its weight of Welsh rabbit and beer, and Sir Lancelot saying farewell as he sets forth in quest of glory and vindication."

"Cruel! cruel! cruel!" muttered Langdon, cut to the heart, as he turned and strode hurriedly across the dining-room.

"Come back! come back, Teddy!" thundered Gwendolen, in her father's loudest and most imperative basso. But Langdon paid no heed to what he thought was an old man's belated behest.

"He'll never come back," purred old Ogden, contentedly sipping his beer. "And there'll be a lot less fool goo-goo talk in this world, if he doesn't."

XIII

"I'm sure that you will pardon me, Mr. Ogden," remarked the electrician, gazing at Gwendolen, whose varied emotions had whitened her father's lips and cheeks, "if I remind you that I am here, by appointment, for a distinct purpose. While I don't object to a rabbit and beer at midnight, I have come to you, sir, not as a guest, but as a specialist."

"I know! I know!" cried the girl, excitedly, trying to keep her father's voice under control. "But I implore you to be patient, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Richardson is my name, Mr. Ogden."

"Mr. Richardson," said Gwendolen, in a hoarse whisper, glancing furtively at her father, who was engaged, at that moment, in a smiling effort to talk French to Jeannette, the while Mrs. Prentiss sat, pale and silent, seemingly awaiting the crack of doom; "Mr. Richardson, I beg of you, I appeal to

you as—er—as man to man, to go to Mr. Langdon's assistance. I have reason to believe that he is in deadly peril. If you make haste, sir, you may save his life!"

A flush had come into the thin cheeks of the electrician as he listened to what he thought was an appeal from an old man upon the verge of a nervous collapse.

"From what I have heard, Mr. Ogden," remarked Richardson, slowly, "I understand that a desperate character, under the influence of alcohol, is locked up in your wine-closet. I am also led to believe that the aforesaid desperate character is armed with at least one revolver and, possibly, a bowie-knife. Your daughter, sir, evidently takes it for granted that Mr. Langdon has gone from here to certain death. Under these circumstances, Mr. Ogden, you must admit that it is not at all unreasonable on my part to hesitate before rushing recklessly to Mr. Langdon's assistance. I have a wife and children, sir."

"Then, you must need all the money that you can get," whispered Gwendolen, hoarsely. "If you will go at once to Mr. Langdon's aid, Mr. Richardson, I will give you a thousand dollars. You must decide now. There is no time to lose."

"I'm off!" cried the electrician, springing to his feet, and rushing across the dining-room on the jump.

"Hey, there!" shrieked old Ogden, in amazement. "Come back, young fellow! Do you want to die? Come back, I say! What have you been saying to that man, father? He's an electrician. He's our only hope. Do you want to have him shot?"

"He has gone to save Mr. Langdon's life, my daughter," answered Gwendolen, gruffly, glaring down angrily at her father's pudgy hands.

"*Magnifique!*" cried Jeannette, enthusiastically. "Ze house eet ees full of ze heroes, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"But why did he rush to death so suddenly, father?" persisted the old man, a gleam of suspicion coming into Gwendolen's dark eyes. "What did you say to him?"

"I offered him a thousand dollars, if he would save Mr. Langdon's life."

"A thousand dollars!" shouted Ogden, in a kind of hysterical shriek, jumping to his dainty little feet. "A thousand dollars! I won't pay it. Teddy's not worth the money. He's too soft. I'll cancel that contract mighty quick, if I can get there in time."

With that, the old man tripped across the dining-room with both agility and grace.

"Come back! come back!" cried Gwendolen, imploringly. "Oh, what shall I do? They'll be killed, and it's all my fault!"

"Be calm, Richard," murmured Mrs. Prentiss, smiling sadly at the speaker; "you are not at all to blame. If anybody is at fault in this matter, I'm afraid that I must plead guilty."

"Yes, you're It!" groaned Gwendolen, wearily. "But that's a matter of no moment just at present. Hark! how very quiet it is! What do you suppose they're doing? James!"

From somewhere at the rear of the room came the butler, a distraught flunkey whose frightened eyes were on his master's face, but whose ears were far away.

"James, you have the key to the wine-closet. Give it to me at once."

"Yes, sir," said the butler, in a dazed way, but making no motion indicating that he had understood the order.

"Listen!" murmured Mrs. Prentiss. "They are talking, are they not?"

"*Parbleu!*" cried Jeannette, restlessly. "Eet ees terreëble—ze suspense."

"The key, James!" cried Gwendolen. "Why do you not obey me? Are you deaf?"

The butler, extracting a key from a waistcoat-pocket, placed it gingerly beside the revolver that Teddy Langdon had left upon the table.

"Hif you'll hexcuse me, Mr. Ogden," said James, firmly, and with a touch of his former hauteur, "hi'll give notice at once, sir. My nerves, so to speak, Mr. Ogden, are not what they were,

sir. Hi've tried to do my duty, Mr. Ogden, but I cawn't stand any more o' this chaos, so to speak, sir."

"Very well, James," remarked Gwendolen, getting heavily to her father's feet; "you may go when your month is up."

"But, pardon me, Mr. Ogden—" began the butler, his pale face flushing red.

"That will do, James," said the girl, curtly, bending forward across the table, and grasping the key and the revolver with awkward fingers.

"Richard, Richard!" cried Mrs. Prentiss, springing to her feet. "What does this mean? What are you going to do?"

Glancing down at the revolver in her father's fat hand, Gwendolen smiled, grimly.

"Possibly, I am about to make you a widow, Mrs. Prentiss," she said aloud. To herself, she murmured: "At all events, I'm going to give Teddy Langdon a chance for his life."

"Richard," protested Mrs. Prentiss, seizing Gwendolen by her father's arm, "you must not leave this room! It is madness. You don't know how to handle a revolver; and, if you did, you would stand no chance against Tom."

"Where's James?" came a shrill voice from the further end of the room; and, a moment later, old Ogden appeared at the doorway, a very beautiful young woman in appearance, laboring evidently under great excitement.

"Where's James?" he repeated, waving one white hand in the air as he bore down upon the table, clutching his skirts with the other; "where's James, I say? We want the key to the wine-closet. Listen! Do you hear that, girls? That's Thomas Prentiss, of Kentucky, smashing glass bottles. If we don't get him out of there at once, I won't have a drop of wine left in half an hour. He's the worst that ever happened. Where's James, I say?"

"He resigned his position a few moments ago," explained Gwendolen, gloomily. "He said that your ec-

centric ways, my daughter, had driven him from the house."

"My eccentric ways!" cried her father, in a shrill treble. "Well, I like that! I'm the only man or woman in the house who has got a ray of sense left. Hark! Prentiss is playing ten-pins with the champagne bottles. He won't listen to reason. We've tried to argue with him through the keyhole, but he insists that we're to blame for locking him up. He's more than half right, perhaps. The only thing to do is to let him out. Where's James, I say? He hasn't left the house, has he?"

"I am sure I don't know," replied Gwendolen, reseating herself at the table, in a despondent way; "but, if you want the key to the wine-closet——"

"That's what I do want," cried her father, impatiently. "Where is it?"

"I have it here," answered his daughter, stiffly. "But I shall give it up on one condition only. If Mrs. Prentiss is willing to release her husband, she can have the key. Otherwise, I shall keep it, and Mr. Prentiss may stay where he is."

"But, Richard——" began Mrs. Prentiss, whose blond beauty had faded perceptibly under the strain and stress of the last hour.

"I think——er——Mrs. Prentiss, that——er——father is quite right," commented old Ogden, at the top of Gwendolen's voice. "Take the key, and follow me! Hurry, now! You can speak to your Tommy through the keyhole before you let him out. Perhaps, that will calm him. Come on, Emily——Mrs. Prentiss. Follow me!"

A moment later, Gwendolen found herself seated with Jeannette alone at the table.

"Monsieur," murmured the French girl, softly, "what ees ze mattaire wiz everybody? And mademoiselle, she ees so vare strange!"

"Will you kindly keep quiet, Jeannette?" grumbled Gwendolen, crossly. "Listen! what was that? More glass, was it not? Go at once, Jeannette, and tell Mr. Langdon to come here.

Do you hear me? Don't stare at me like that, but go!"

With a glance of amazement at the outward seeming of Richard Ogden, the French girl reluctantly left the dining-room, and Gwendolen, breathing a hoarse sigh of relief at finding herself, for the first time in many hours, alone with her great sorrow, leaned back in her chair, and gazed with weary old eyes at the richly decorated ceiling above her gray head.

XIV

To Gwendolen Ogden, at that moment, solitude had its drawbacks, as she quickly discovered. Alone and undisturbed, she found her mind dwelling upon the apparent impossibility of the psychical readjustment that she craved. Hopes, based upon the skill of the electrician, should he be placed in full possession of the details of the metempsychosis that had come to her father and herself, she felt were futile. Mr. Richardson, in all probability, could be of no more service to the Ogdens in their present plight than a carpenter or a plumber.

And a revelation had come to the girl, during the evening, that had done much to add to the horror of the cruel fate that had befallen her. She had discovered that the flirtation she had been carrying forward with Teddy Langdon for several months past had affected her heart. Seemingly deprived of all hope of ever being more to him than a friend, Gwendolen had realized, to her dismay, that she had been in love with the man for fully two weeks. How much this self-confession intensified the bitterness of the girl's reverie, it is easy to conceive. To feel the honey-sweetness of love's young dream, while a twinge of vicarious gout is gripping at your toes; to throb with the joy of a self-revelation that comes to a woman but once in her life, while your gray head is aching with the weariness of old age; to know that you belong to another, and to fear that you will never be your-

self; to long for orange-blossoms and the wedding-march, and to realize that your immediate needs consist of a porous-plaster and a narcotic—is not this to suffer a torture hitherto unprecedented in the history of the race?

What had that dark apparition, seemingly sprung from an Oriental gewgaw, said? "*The decree hath gone forth that ye must change bodies for a season.*" A season! What an elastic phrase that was! In its technical application, it meant three months. But, on the other hand, it could be used to cover a few days, or even a few hours. "*When the time for thy deliverance shall be at hand—*" The whole tenor of the decree, as Gwendolen recalled the fateful words, was to the effect that the soul-transposition involved was not to be permanent; that a limit had been fixed to the strange punishment imposed upon Richard Ogden and his daughter.

"But I can't stand much more of it," moaned Gwendolen, hoarsely, her old eyes fixed upon the door through which, as she fondly hoped, Teddy Langdon was to come to her. And, presently, she saw him enter the dining-room, glancing nervously over his shoulder as he bore down upon her.

"You sent for me, Mr. Ogden?" began the young man, seating himself in the chair that he had recently quitted. "I am glad to come to you, sir. I have something of much importance to myself to say to you, Mr. Ogden."

"But first," interposed the girl, gazing down ruefully at her father's hands, "first tell me, Mr. Langdon, what has happened at the wine-closet. Have they opened the door?"

"Yes," answered Teddy, drumming nervously upon the table for a moment, and then lighting a cigarette. "We found Mr. Prentiss fast asleep on the floor, surrounded by broken glass and a pool of wine. He has been disarmed, and is now perfectly harmless. But, sir, I must change the subject, abruptly. We are sure to be interrupted, and I am in sore need of your advice, Mr. Ogden."

"My advice?" queried the girl,

her father's face displaying her surprise.

"Permit me to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Ogden," went on the young man, rather feverishly. "I don't believe that it will astonish you, sir, if I tell you that I am in love with your daughter. You must have observed, Mr. Ogden, my admiration for Gwendolen. I have never made any effort to disguise my feelings in this matter."

"That's true enough," commented the girl, gruffly. "How long have you been in love with my daughter, Ted—Mr. Langdon?"

"For exactly four weeks, sir," answered the youth, readily. "I went over the links with her at the country club just a month ago to-day, and it came to me, in a flash, at the third tee, that I could never be happy without her."

"Yes, you played wretched golf that day," Langdon, much to his amazement, heard the old man murmur.

"But, Mr. Ogden," went on the young man, "before I ask you for permission to push my suit with Gwendolen, I feel that I owe it to myself to put a few questions to you, as delicately as I can. Frankly, sir, I have been both shocked and mystified to-night."

"In what way, sir?" asked Gwendolen, in her father's haughtiest tones.

Langdon was silent for a time, evidently chilled by Mr. Ogden's unsympathetic manner; but, presently, he said:

"It will sound like a breach of confidence, I fear, sir, if I explain myself in detail. But there is so much at stake in this matter—your daughter's happiness, Mr. Ogden, and mine—that I feel that I must go on."

"My daughter's happiness, Mr. Langdon? How do you know that that is involved in what you have to say?"

"It's one of two things, Mr. Ogden," said the young man, stubbornly; "either your daughter loves me, or she is the most unprincipled and heartless flirt that ever broke a man's heart for fun; or, I regret to say, sir, there may be something more to it all."

"That's interesting," commented Gwendolen, rather pompously, her father's heavy features set in a way that Langdon didn't like. "Explain yourself, sir."

"I accused her, in the smoking-room," admitted Langdon, reluctantly, "of being flighty and queer to-night. I even went so far as to ask her if she had ever had an attack of nervous prostration."

"Did you, indeed?" remarked the girl, in a hoarse murmur; "and what did she answer?"

"Her reply I shall never forget," replied Langdon, excitedly. "This is what she said, Mr. Ogden, word for word: 'Well, rather! I've had three to-day. And, if I know the symptoms, I'll have several more before midnight. But, if you think I'm not myself, young Langdon, you're mistaken. Appearances may be deceptive, but I'm I—or I'm me—and there ain't enough electricity between here and Mars to change that fact.'"

A deep flush came into old Ogden's face, as Gwendolen realized how absurd her father's reckless words must have sounded to Teddy Langdon. But she said nothing, and the young man went on:

"And then, you remember, sir, how her sarcastic gibes drove me to go hunting, unarmed, for that Kentucky desperado. Your daughter, Mr. Ogden, really seemed to be more amused than shocked at the prospect of my sudden death. Is it strange, sir, that I feel the need of your counsel and advice before I go further in this matter? Put yourself in my place, sir——"

"Please don't," implored Gwendolen, hoarsely.

"Don't what?" asked Langdon, in surprise.

"Don't talk like that, Teddy. If you only knew!" Old Ogden's voice died away in a cross between a sigh and a sob.

"But what shall I do, sir?" persisted the young man, lighting a fresh cigarette, and gazing at old Ogden, as he supposed, with gloomy eyes. "I

love your daughter passionately, madly, but there is a certain wildness about her to-night that gives me a chill. Tell me, frankly, Mr. Ogden, is she addicted to—that is, I mean, is it acute or chronic?"

"You are taking a great liberty, young man! I am sure, sir, that, if my daughter's words and manner are not pleasing to you, you are at perfect liberty to take your departure."

"Mr. Ogden!" cried Langdon, springing to his feet, his cheeks reddening with anger. "I will say good night to you, sir. I regret exceedingly that I did not take my departure an hour ago."

"Sit down, Teddy," said the girl, in a voice that sounded like a groan. "Don't go!"

Langdon reseated himself, the expression of anger in his face giving place to a look of amazement.

"What does this mean, sir?" he asked, nervously. "Frankly, Mr. Ogden, you are becoming as much of a mystery to me as your daughter."

At that instant, their tête-à-tête was interrupted by the swish of skirts and a petulant treble, as old Ogden, in appearance a bright-eyed, excited maiden, rushed into the dining-room.

"What are you doing here, young Langdon?" cried the old man, hotly. "Are you making a complaint? What has he been saying to you, father? Has he been proposing for my hand? If he has, he can't have it. You may just make up your minds, both of you, that I shall live and die an old maid. Do you understand me, Teddy Langdon? I'm not a candidate for matrimony, and you may roll that up in your next cigarette, and smoke it."

"Gwendolen!" groaned his daughter, tears coming into her aged eyes, as she saw that Langdon was about to take his departure.

"I'll say good night to you again, Mr. Ogden," murmured the latter, bowing stiffly. "I trust, Miss Ogden," he added, turning toward the young woman, whose black eyes were fixed angrily upon his white face, "I trust that you may never regret your very

eccentric treatment of one whose affection for you is too deep and true to be easily destroyed."

At that instant, the expression upon Gwendolen's beautiful face changed, and old Ogden cried out, in hysterical falsetto:

"Listen! listen! I hear thunder! There's no mistake about it this time! That's thunder, sure! Listen!"

XV

"ANOTHER false alarm!" exclaimed Ogden, in a petulant treble, as he sank into a chair, and waved a beautiful hand in the air. "Who was it defied the lightning? Ajax, wasn't it? Well, Ajax knew his business. I don't. How can I defy the lightning when there isn't any lightning? There isn't even a peal of distant thunder. Teddy's gone, has he? I'm glad of it. I don't like that young man. He makes me tired. What's the matter, my dear? Don't go to pieces like that. 'Tears, idle tears!' You look like an old man in his second childhood, Gwendolen. I object to this hysterical exhibition that you are making of me. Brace up, girl! I have good news for you."

Gwendolen wiped the tears from her father's sad face, and gazed gloomily at a beautiful young woman who was filling a goblet with beer, and smiling gladly at his daughter.

"Things are looking up a bit," remarked old Ogden, hopefully, after he had drained his glass. "That wild man from Kentucky has gone home peacefully with his wife. Score one! Jeannette felt that she'd really made a night of it, and she's gone to bed. Score two! Teddy Langdon has made his exit—this time through the front door—and that's three. And the electrician, Gwendolen, is waiting for us in the smoking-room. Score four! Now, stop sobbing, and come with me. We'll lay the whole matter before Mr. Richardson, and it's just possible that he'll be able to pull us out of this infernal scrape."

"But you seem to have been very happy all the evening, father," remarked Gwendolen, reproachfully, making no effort to get to old Ogden's feet. "I'd like to return to my own body, of course, but why should you wish to be readjusted?"

"Why?" asked her father, shrilly. "How much longer, girl, do you think I can stand this fool costume? And do you imagine that it is pleasant to a man of sense to have that spoony Langdon whispering nonsense into this dainty little ear? The whole thing's absurd, Gwendolen. It isn't wholesome. I'm not easily disturbed, as you know, my dear; but I'm obliged to draw the line somewhere, and I draw it at the supernatural. Now, Gwen, brace up, and come with me to the smoking-room. This electrical expert, Mr. Richardson, may have something up his sleeve. He's mercenary, isn't he? He'll help us out, if money can do it. But you let me do the talking, Gwen. You have no idea of the value of money, my child. Your offer to Richardson of a thousand dollars for Teddy Langdon's life was the most unbusinesslike proposition I ever heard of; let me do the talking."

As father and daughter approached the smoking-room, the deep silence, that had fallen upon a household which had been noisy for hours, weighed heavily upon their spirits. The optimism of old Ogden's recent mood had passed away, and his white hands, as they clutched at his gown, were cold.

"How do you feel, Gwendolen?" he whispered, as they reached the centre of the drawing-room.

"I think I'm scared," answered his daughter, hoarsely; "but maybe it's only rheumatism."

Simultaneously, they had come to a standstill, and now stood gazing at the portière that had been drawn across the entrance to the smoking-room.

"Ah—Mr. Richardson!" called out old Ogden, at the top of his daughter's voice.

"He doesn't answer," muttered Gwendolen, presently. "Why don't you pull the portière, papa?"

"I don't know," whispered the old man, nervously. "Are you subject to chills, Gwen? I feel very cold."

"Ah—Mr. Richardson!" cried his daughter, in an insistent basso.

"He's dead—or he has deserted us!" exclaimed Ogden, in a despairing falsetto.

Suddenly, all the lights in the house went out, and father and daughter, hand clasped in hand, stood trembling in total darkness. For a moment, no sound reached their straining ears; but, presently, they heard the brass rings of the heavy portière click together, and an imperious voice commanded them to enter.

Stumbling forward, with hands still locked together, old Ogden and his daughter made their way into the smoking-room. In the deep, black gloom, only the faintest outlines of the furniture were visible, and they felt, rather than saw, the tall figure of an aged man, whose right arm was raised above his head.

"That can't be Richardson, can it, Gwen? You'd better speak to him. But don't be gruff and domineering. He's very high-strung and sensitive, I think. Tell him, very gently, that we're here."

"He knows we're here," said Gwendolen, in a kind of hoarse groan. "He's looking straight at us. Is he going to strike us?"

"Pardon me, sir," piped her father, falteringly, "but—but—if you—want a hundred—or—or even a hundred and fifty for—er—Oriental missions—or opium—I'll let you have it. It has been an expensive day, sir, but—I'd really like to—to—blow you off."

"Don't talk like that, father," grumbled Gwendolen. "You are so tactless! You'll make him very angry, if you aren't careful."

"It's up to you, then," muttered Ogden, crossly. "Why don't you speak to him, Gwen?"

"You'll pardon my daughter, sir—" began the girl, in her father's most ceremonious manner.

"Drop that!" whispered Ogden, hysterically. "You can't fool him about

our sex. He knows who's who in America. Try, try again, my daughter."

"If you would accept a thousand dollars, sir—" began Gwendolen, anew.

"Easy, easy, there!" cried her father, in a subdued whistle. "Don't insult him, Gwen. He isn't grasping. Anything over a hundred and fifty would seem like bribery or blackmail, wouldn't it?"

"We've got to do something, father," grumbled the girl. "I can't stand him any longer. I wish he'd speak."

"He's going to speak," exclaimed old Ogden, excitedly. "I can see it in his eye. Listen!"

"Will there be any fireworks, do you think, father?" asked Gwendolen, apprehensively.

"Listen!" repeated her father. "Why doesn't he go on? 'Speak, speak, thou fearful guest!'" he quoted, wildly, at the top of his daughter's voice.

Slowly, the apparition lowered his menacing arm and hand, but there came no softness to his piercing eyes.

"The time for thy deliverance is now at hand," thundered the black spectre, *"and, in the sight of men, thou who art Richard the father, shalt be thyself; and thou who art Gwendolen the daughter, shalt be Gwendolen the daughter, from this time forth forevermore. But your eyes, that were closed, are closed; and the wisdom that ye lack ye shall never gain. Farewell! farewell! farewell!"*

A moment later, Richard Ogden found himself seated in a lounging-chair, an unlighted cigar in his hand, the smoking-room illuminated by electric jets, and Gwendolen, reclining upon a divan, gazing at him with dark, gleaming eyes.

"What does it mean, father?" gasped the girl, too overjoyed at her return to her own body to speak calmly. "Did you hear what he said?"

"Yes; I think he meant to imply—whoever he is—that he has given us up as a bad job, Gwendolen. Didn't you gather that impression from his words?"

"And he—he intimated that he wouldn't do it again, didn't he, father?" asked Gwendolen, anxiously.

"That's what I understood him to say, my daughter," answered old Ogden, scratching a match and lighting a cigar. "Isn't this delightful!" he cried, gaily. "'Richard is himself again!' Yes, my dear, that old, black transposer has scratched us off his list. He let us down rather easy, at the last. No lightning; no thunder! So much better form, don't you think, Gwen, than his melodramatic *matinée* at the outset? But, I don't believe he has been quite pleased with us, my dear. There was a note in his voice, just now, that seemed to me to indicate displeasure, if not actual disgust."

"Well, you see, father," remarked Gwendolen, leaning back luxuriously against the divan's pillows, "he probably came to the conclusion that you'd be just as close about money-matters in my body as in yours."

"Close about money-matters?" growled the old man, flipping the ashes from his cigar with a petulant gesture. "Didn't I give Jeannette ten dollars to spend a pleasant evening? Didn't I offer her ten more after it was too late for her to accept it? And I was prepared to give that electrician one hundred dollars in cash if he would change us back again, Gwen. Fortunately, that old man in black isn't grasping. He seems to believe in art for art's sake. But I wouldn't call him an amateur, would you, my dear?"

"No," answered Gwendolen, wearily. "He's very clever, to put it mildly, father. And, now, I'll leave you to finish your cigar. I'm going into the library to write a note, and then I shall be off to bed. Good night, papa."

"But it's very late, my child," remarked her father, protestingly. "Is the matter so pressing that you cannot defer your note until the morning?"

"I could not sleep, father," said the girl, her cheeks reddening and her

eyes snapping, "if I had not written a few lines to Teddy Langdon, asking him to come to me to-morrow. He has been treated outrageously, father. I owe him an explanation, and I——"

"An explanation?" grumbled her father. "Of a truth, that old, black transposer speaketh sooth when he saith: 'Your eyes, that were closed, are closed; and the wisdom that ye lack ye shall never gain.'"

"He did not have me alone in mind," protested Gwendolen, maliciously; "and, besides, I don't see what all that has to do with Teddy Langdon."

"Your eyes, that were closed, are closed," repeated the old man, stubbornly; "but I'll try to open them, Gwen. Can't you see that the only permanent result of this—what shall we call it?—psychical disturbance, is to give me a line on Teddy Langdon? Now, I tell you, Gwen, he's flirtatious; not only that, he is very stubborn. He doesn't know when he's snubbed. I have no hesitation, my daughter, in placing him upon my list of unnecessary luxuries. I should hate to believe that my only child had become permanently addicted to what I may be permitted to call the Teddy Langdon habit."

"But I have, father," said the girl, with a sob. "I didn't know it until to-night. But I have."

"H'm!" grumbled old Ogden, crossly. "I don't wish to be tyrannical, Gwen, or unjust——"

"But you are both, father," put in the girl, emphatically, "where Teddy Langdon is concerned."

"But he's soft, my child," mused her father. "I've always suspected it, and now I know it. I might have had quite a pleasant evening, if it hadn't been for Langdon. But, *de gustibus non est disputandum!*"

"If you are going to quote Latin, papa, I must go at once," cried Gwendolen, tartly, turning to leave the room.

"Wait a minute, my dear," implored old Ogden, scowling at the smoke from his cigar. "About how

much will Teddy cost us a year, do you think, if you marry him?"

"I'm sure I haven't the slightest idea," answered Gwendolen, lightly. "Shall I ask him, father?"

"I wish you would," admitted the old man, frankly.

"Well, I won't, papa. Good night!" cried the girl, as she hurried away from the smoking-room toward the library. A moment later, she was back again, her face pale, but a smile upon her lips.

"What now, Gwen?" asked her father, apprehensively.

"I have found that Oriental paper-weight, papa," she said, in a tense, excited voice.

Old Ogden sprang to his feet in consternation.

"Great Scott!" he cried, in affright. "Do you hear thunder, Gwen? Listen! Where did you find it? Have you got it with you? Don't drop it, for heaven's sake! It's a diabolical thing!"

The girl drew herself erect and gazed at old Ogden with dark, insistent eyes, the while her mouth and jaw displayed determination.

"Will you promise me, father, that, if I give you the paper-weight, you will place no obstacle in the way of my marrying Teddy Langdon?"

"A contract made under duress and compulsion, Gwendolen, is null and void," remarked her father, argumentatively. "But, if it comes to a choice, of course, I'd rather have Teddy Langdon around the house than that old black transposer. Take your Teddy, if you must have him, Gwen; and give me the paper-weight."

"It looks harmless, doesn't it?" said the girl, as she placed the Oriental curio in her father's outstretched hand.

"But looks don't count for much," remarked old Ogden, thoughtfully, gazing down at the uncanny paper-weight with tired eyes. "Your Teddy looks harmless, Gwen, but he isn't!"



TWO SONGS

HER greeting is a dulcet bell—
 Love's daybreak and delight;
 Her smile is noon, and her farewell
 Leads in the stars at night.
 She is the sunrise and the gleam
 Of dew upon the rose,
 The vision that evokes the dream,
 The song in slumber's prose.

II

Roses are the rhymes I wreath—
 Take them, every one;
 Love—the fragrance that you breathe,
 And your smile their sun.
 When the petals fall apart,
 Then, in melody,
 You shall read a rose's heart,
 And the heart of me.

JULIAN DURAND.

MADRIGAL

HEIGH-HO! I know where I would be,
 When June comes up the dingle,
 And earth with mirth and melody
 Is throbbing, all a-tingle;
 When every piper tunes his pipe,
 And lips and roses both are ripe,
 And not a lad goes single!

It's then, my masters, I would stray
 Along the laneway bending,
 Through meadow-reaches golden-gay,
 To such a happy ending—
 A cottage where, the porch above,
 The vines entwine as though in love,
 The leaves and blossoms blending.

There would a lass, with morning eyes,
 Trip forth with gleeful greeting;
 June, 'neath her span of radiant skies,
 Ne'er saw so sweet a sweetening;
 And ne'er, I ween, 'twixt maid and man,
 Since hearts to thrill with love began,
 A fonder lover's meeting!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



VERY LIKELY

ROMANTIC YOUNG LADY (*spending Summer on a farm*)—Just hear how those old trees in the orchard moan and groan in the storm, like the crying of a lost soul!

SMALL BOY—Well, I guess you'd make a worse racket if you were as full of green apples as they are!



SEALING THE BARGAIN

MADGE—How do you know he became engaged to that girl he took out in his auto?

MARJORIE—On the way home he didn't wear his mask.

HOW "THE KID" WENT OVER THE RANGE

By Cyrus Townsend Brady

THERE had been a quarrel between them, a lover's quarrel over a trivial matter unworthy a second thought. Most lovers' quarrels have about as much foundation as theirs. Whatever the ethics of the situation, it was sufficiently painful to fill both of them with misery. On the principle of so bearing herself that the other party should suffer the more in any quarrel, Miss Josephine Cooper, deliberately disregarding several tentative efforts at reconciliation—which Lieutenant William Barnard, 12th Cavalry, U.S.A., being the injured party and the masculine, felt that it was only proper he should make—coolly ordered her horse, asked Captain McCauley to assist her to mount, and was preparing to ride away.

Before she did so, she flashed one look at Barnard hovering disconsolately near with a mien as profoundly abject as even the most self-willed woman could desire. Fortunately for him, he caught the glance of the sparkling blue eye, and seemed to find something encouraging there, although it was patent a moment later that the wish was father to the supposition.

At any rate, he stepped to her side, and, under pretense of adjusting the stirrup strap, detained her for a few moments—an attention to which she had no inward objection, be it said.

"Josephine—" he began.

"I think you would better say 'Miss Cooper'—after last night," she interrupted, coldly.

"I want to apologize," he went on, unheeding; "it's all my own fault. I was all wrong. I'm a beast."

He had not been, and he was not, but that was what the girl wanted him to say, nevertheless. Her heart throbbed with delight as he spoke, but, because she felt guilty herself, she concluded he had not yet had punishment enough.

"I accept your apology, Mr. Barnard, although no apology can ever restore matters to—er—the former footing. Good morning."

She lifted the reins, but he caught the bridle and detained her.

"Oh, don't say that!" he pleaded. "Surely, you were a little to blame yourself."

He was a profoundly politic young man, but this bad move was due to his agitation lest she should escape him.

"Not at all, sir," replied the girl, with a great show of spirit. "Take your hand off the bridle at once!"

"At least—" he urged, desperately, "don't go out alone."

"Why not?"

"I don't know, but I fear——"

"'A soldier and afeared'?" she quoted, laughing without merriment.

"'Afeared' for you, Josephine."

"Nonsense, Mr. Barnard! What is there to be afraid of? There are no Indians except tame ones and dead ones for a hundred miles. The most unpleasant object I am likely to encounter during the day could not be so bad as yourself, sir. I'm going for a canter. Will you release my horse?"

He made no movement to let go the bridle. She lifted the little rawhide whip he had given her.

"Great heavens!" he gasped, star-

ing at her. "You wouldn't strike me?"

"Of course not, but the horse. Will you let him go? Thank you. Good morning."

She cantered off over the open toward the wood which bordered the river, leaving the lieutenant biting his lips in futile annoyance.

"Hello!" said the little bishop, looking up as the young man stamped his foot, and muttered something which was decidedly unecclesiastical. "What's the matter, Barnard?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Where is Josephine?"

"Gone off yonder."

"Oho!" said the bishop. "You have had a difference, have you? I see."

"Yes, sir. My cursed—I beg your pardon, sir—temper—"

"Ye-es," remarked the bishop, sapiently, "I suppose so. I've seen this sort of thing before. You can tell her it was your temper, but you needn't be particular to inform me. Never mind; she'll come back safely, presently."

"But I don't like to see her riding over this country alone, sir."

"What could happen to her?" asked the old man.

"Nothing that I know of."

"There are no hostiles around here now, are there?"

"Not one," answered Captain McCauley, joining in the conversation. "I don't know anything that could possibly happen to her. She is quite safe. There are no wild animals here, and she has a revolver in her holster. I saw to that, and she knows how to handle it, too. Bishop, it's just a lover's apprehension on Barnard's part. I wish he'd show as much interest in his company back at Fort Kinney."

"Suppose you follow her, Barnard," suggested the bishop. "I've no doubt she would be more than willing to have you overtake her."

"Not I!" replied that young man, moodily; "she wouldn't speak to me, if I did, and I'd better keep away from her for a little, I think."

"Very well," answered the old man; "McCauley and I are going fishing. Come along."

"Do you think she could get lost?" asked Barnard, as Captain McCauley scrambled to his feet, and got ready to join the bishop.

"Of course not," answered that veteran. "She has been on the plains before. She has only to keep watch of the sun, or, at worst, to follow the river. Come along, Barnard. Don't be a jack over that girl! She's all right. Better join us for a day's fishing. There's nothing so good for a man in a—a certain condition, as fishing. He can sit and moon over the water all day with his thoughts elsewhere, and be perfectly happy, thinking he is occupied and not wasting time. It looks cloudy over there, doesn't it, bishop?"

"Yes," answered the bishop, "it ought to be a good day for fishing. Come along, Barnard; the weather will accord with your emotions."

So, with laughter and gentle raillery, they took the disconsolate lover with them to the river. The bishop was enjoying one of his rare vacations, and Captain McCauley, an old friend, had invited him to spend as much time as he could spare at old Fort Kinney, in Northern Wyoming. The bishop had brought with him Miss Josephine Cooper, one of the Bethany College girls, who had graduated that year, and who wanted to see something of the life in the mountains before she returned to Philadelphia. As the bishop and her parents were old-time friends, they were willing that he should take her along. All the eligible young officers at Fort Kinney had promptly fallen in love with Miss Josephine, but Barnard seemed to be in higher favor than the rest.

Toward the close of the bishop's visit, McCauley, who was a bachelor, had made up a party for a fishing and hunting expedition down the Powder River Valley. Barnard, who was his junior lieutenant, had been invited, and Josephine Cooper, accompanied by Mrs. Maloney, the wife of Sergeant

Maloney, who was in charge of the soldiers and servants of the party, had gone along, too. They had enjoyed a delightful time, and were preparing to return the following day, when the unfortunate quarrel between Josephine and Barnard cast a cloud over the happiness of both.

Barnard's misery, as he followed the others down to the river, however, was more than matched by Josephine's regret. Why had she been so perverse? He had apologized, admitted that he was wrong when he had not been, when she really was to blame; therefore, she might have forgiven him without loss of dignity or prestige, in which case he would have been with her, and she would not have been loping along under the trees alone. Not that she was afraid of anything, but there was no particular fun in riding alone, and she wished she could call him to her. She checked her horse and furtively glanced back, but she saw Barnard following the bishop and the captain toward the river away from her.

"Fishing!" she murmured to herself; "that's how much he cares for me! That's all men care for, anyway—killing something, or breaking some woman's heart! Get up, Dick!"

She laid her crop lightly on the neck of the big cavalry horse, and the well-trained animal instantly sprang into a long, sweeping gallop which carried her over the country at a great pace. He was not exactly a lady's horse—there were none at the post—but she was a good enough horsewoman to manage him thoroughly, and she rather enjoyed the big, rangy trooper.

Just before she entered the thick of the wood, she turned back for one more look. The camp, with its Sibley tents and big, canvas-covered wagons, shone brilliantly white in the green of the landscape, and Bridget Maloney's red petticoat, as she busied herself over the remains of the breakfast, added a bright dash of color to relieve the white. The sergeant and his helpers, the drivers, and the others,

were lounging around the camp, but the three other men had vanished.

The country in which Josephine found herself was sufficiently beautiful to compensate—so far as the absence of humanity can ever be compensated for by nature—for her solitude. Before her, and close at hand, for the camp had been made among the foothills, rose the gigantic peaks of the Big Horn Range. It was Summer, but the tops of the mountains were covered with banks of snow which fairly blazed in the brilliant sunlight. She had been steadily ascending since leaving the camp, and she could look back for miles over scenery peculiarly wild, rugged and desolate.

Great, rocky buttes rose here and there around her, and sometimes the expanse of the country was broken by clumps of trees or level, grass-covered oases, nestling in the shadow of huge masses of rocks like that in which the camp was made. The winding course of the river as it meandered toward the distant plateau, which resembled the prairies of the bishop's diocese, was indicated by trees at all the levels. In front of her, the mountains rose bleak, awe-inspiring and grand. The influence of their majesty and calm gradually stole over her. A quarrel, even a great one, in the presence of these tremendous manifestations of nature seemed trivial, petty; and a little disagreement, such as had parted the lovers this morning, was of no consequence whatever.

She checked her horse, and would have turned back; but, reflecting that Barnard had gone fishing, she concluded to go forward over the foothills for a nearer look at those great mountains. She determined to forgive him as soon as she might see him. Nay, she would even admit that she had been in the wrong, not he. Having reached this happy conclusion, she felt immensely relieved, and gave herself with unalloyed pleasure to the enjoyment of the marvelous scenery. There was something in the situation entrancing to the Eastern girl, who, except for her four years at Bethany,

had seen little of the West. She had come to Bethany only because her parents wished her to have the benefit of the bishop's care, as many other Eastern girls had received it. She rode on, therefore, threading her way among rocky buttes, galloping over stretches of grassy sward, plunging through bits of forest, forcing her horse across some narrow, shrunken stream, giving no thought whatever to time, distance or direction, and ever climbing higher and higher up the slope. Her eyes were fixed on the changing panorama of mountains before her as her tortuous course brought mighty peaks into successive view. She was fascinated.

The stillness was perfect. The solitude was absolute. There was nothing to disturb the current of her thoughts until she was suddenly awakened by a peal of thunder. It had been growing darker for some time, but she had not noticed it. She looked back quickly, and saw that the sky was heavily overcast. She had been long enough in the West to recognize the signs of a cyclone. It had developed with astonishing rapidity, and seemed about to burst upon her. What should she do?

Before her rose a lofty and threatening mass of rock. On the other side of it, possibly, she might find shelter of some kind. Her first thought, of course, had been to ride toward the camp, but, in the haze of that approaching cyclone, she could not see it, and she no longer knew in what direction it lay. This would have given her great uneasiness had not her thoughts been centered upon the storm. She could look for the camp later; now, she must seek shelter. Under the lee of the great rock she might find a hiding-place.

The horse, as if sharing her apprehension, had been pawing the ground uneasily, and welcomed the shake of the reins and the word which sent him toward the rock. It was, perhaps, half a mile distant, and the way was fairly clear. She looked at her watch. It was just eleven o'clock. She had been gone nearly four hours, therefore.

They had breakfasted early, and she had started early from the camp, and the horse was somewhat tired, but she fairly raced him over that ground. Just as she gained the rock, the storm broke upon her.

There was not a tree in her vicinity. There was nothing that the cyclone could take hold of, so it passed harmlessly over her head with a terrific roaring that nearly frightened her to death. What might have happened to her had she not gained the shelter of that huge rock, she could see by the way the storm tore up trees farther away in its path.

After the wind had spent itself, down came the rain. Such was the storm's violence that she waited for some time, thinking it would break, but, at the end of a half-hour, there were no indications whatever of a cessation. It was now noon, and she was tired and hungry. It required some hardihood for her to leave the shelter of the rock, and battle with the rain, and she waited a few moments longer. She wished more than ever for the presence of Barnard. But something had to be done. She could not remain there forever. She doubted if any one could find her without a long, exhaustive search. She must get back of her own motion. How to do that was a question while the rain kept up.

At last, she walked her horse out into the open, and looked in the direction whence she supposed she had come. The view was hidden in a black whirl of driving rain. She could neither see nor hear the river. It had been her intention to make for it and then, so far as she could—for the Powder River up there was a wild, mountain stream, often tearing through cliffs and cañons, which would prevent any one from reaching its banks—to follow its general course down the mountain, until she reached the camp. That was the only intelligent course. Now, even that could not be done—at least, not in this rain.

It dawned upon her at last, as she sat on her shivering horse, drenched to the skin, that she was lost. She could

scarcely see the top of the great rock that had sheltered her from the mist and rain. These weather conditions were rather unusual, but were, nevertheless, a painful fact to her. What could she do? She was utterly bewildered. Yet she could not remain still. She shook the reins over the horse's neck, and spoke to him. He turned, and slowly made his way forward. Going anywhere was better than standing still, for she had become so nervous that it was impossible for her to remain long in one place. She would let the horse choose, since she had lost all sense of direction.

The horse proceeded carefully, picking his way, at first, but finally he seemed to strike some sort of a trail. She had heard that there were no settlements nearer than Fort Caspar, toward which the military road from Fort Kinney led southward. Yet, as she rode on, by bending low over the saddle she could see marks of a trail. It was an ascending trail; they were going upward, but certainly not in the direction of the camp; and yet, if that were a trail, it must lead somewhere, it must have been made by a human being. There had been some effort, apparently, to put this way in a rough condition for a horse to travel. As she progressed, she grew more certain of this fact.

So absorbed was she in her speculations, that she did not notice that it was growing lighter. In fact, the rain had ceased almost as suddenly as it had begun, and, although the mists still hung low, it was evident that they were thinning also. She was irresolute as to what to do, but, seeing the trail more clearly, she now concluded the best thing was to keep on jogging ahead. By-and-bye the sun came out, and the mist disappeared with astonishing rapidity. As soon as she could see about her, she checked the horse, and surveyed the scene.

She was in the midst of a rocky pass. The scenery was rugged and grand beyond description. Far below her, the river rushed madly to the southward through a deep, gloomy cañon.

July 1903

Far above her, on either side, towered huge walls of rock. The trail led along the face of the cliff, and a few feet ahead of her bent around a bold escarpment, and was lost. It was a steadily contracting trail. Before her, it narrowed so that two horses could not pass. As she looked back, she could see nothing familiar. She had wandered into this great rift in the mountains—from where she knew not, how, she knew not. She might follow the trail back again, but whither it would lead her she had no idea; certainly, not to the camp.

It was long past noon now—one o'clock, she found, by looking at her watch. It would be hours before she could hope to reach the camp, if she ever reached it. Somebody must live at the end of that trail. She hesitated a moment or two, then decided to go forward. It would be perilous to pass around that narrow, jutting precipice, but it would be almost as perilous for her to go back. She shuddered as she saw the dangerous way over which she had come in the mist and rain. The horse had carried her safely thus far. She would trust him farther.

She wanted to see what was around that projecting buttress of rock, anyway, so she urged her horse cautiously on. It was narrower than she had imagined. Where the trail turned, her shoulder actually brushed against the overhanging rock. She shut her eyes, and repressed a desire to scream. The horse went so slowly and carefully that he scarcely seemed to move. She repented of her action. Why had she come? If he stepped on a loose stone, if his foot slipped, they would both go to their death over that precipice, hundreds of feet below. Mr. Barnard would never know how much she had loved him, how sorry she had been, that she would have been his willingly, that—the horse stopped!

She opened her eyes. They had turned the cliff. The trail widened before her, and she stood in safety on a little shoulder of the mountain as wide as a street. Before her was spread out one of the most enchanting pictures

she had ever seen. The trail dropped gently down the slope into a beautiful valley, through which the river ran. The valley—"pocket" or "hole" as such things were called out there—was two or three miles long, perhaps a mile wide at its greatest width, and was literally surrounded by towering walls of barren, unbroken rock. At the other end, a waterfall plunged down a precipice that must have been a thousand feet high, forming the source of the river, which ran purling through the level surface of the valley till it entered the cañon. The area before her was dotted with trees. There were houses in the clearing, the smoke from chimneys floated softly in the still air. There were horses and cattle in the meadows. It was a paradise in these arid mountains.

For a moment, in the heavenly scene which spread before her vision, the girl forgot that she was alone, wet, shivering, hungry, that she was lost. The rain had given a fresh touch to everything, and the place appeared bathed in the sunlight like a gigantic gleaming emerald in a matrix of gray granite.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "how beautiful!"

"I'm glad you like it, ma'am," spoke a voice at her elbow.

As she turned toward the side of the mountain, she saw a rifle protruding over a low wall of rock; it was followed by a handsome head, and then by the tall, well-built and elegant person of a Western cow-boy in the conventional attire, loose shirt, flowing handkerchief, leather "chaps," boots, spurs, broad hat, and so on. Around his waist was a belt, from which depended a sheath knife on one side, on the other, a heavy revolver. He carried his rifle in his hand.

"Glad you like it, ma'am," he repeated, taking off his hat, and exposing a head covered with dark curls.

"Like it?" said Josephine. "Why, it is lovely! I'm lost, sir. My party is camped on the Powder River. I rode away alone this morning, and was

overtaken by the storm. How I came here I scarcely know."

"Wall, you better git out these diggin's as quick as you kin, ma'am. Take my advice, an' mosey down that trail ter onct."

"But can't I get something to eat, and some one to show me the way?"

"Ain't nobody goin' to show you out of here. People who gits in here never comes out. As fer eatin', I've got some bread an' meat, an' here's some liquor."

He reached behind the rocky wall, and handed her a couple of roughly made sandwiches, and then drew from his pocket a silver-mounted flask of whiskey, which he uncorked and proffered her.

"Thank you," said the girl, taking the sandwiches; "I'm afraid I'm robbing you."

"Don't mind that; I kin git more," he answered, laconically, again offering her the liquor.

"No, I'd rather have some water, if you please."

"There ain't none up yere, but I'll git you some," turning away. "You'd better git off your horse an' stretch yourself while you eat. You'll have some tall ridin' to do before you git back, if y' ever do git back."

There was something mysterious about the whole thing, but Josephine Cooper felt sufficiently able to take care of herself in the presence of any ordinary man, and this handsome young fellow appeared entirely harmless, so she felt no uneasiness. She permitted him to assist her to dismount from the horse, which was too tired to move away, and she sat down on the rock and began to eat her sandwiches while her interlocutor went for water. He came back with a tomato-can full of that precious liquid, and handed it to her with an apology for the cup, and then stood and watched her eat and drink.

"I don't know what's going to happen to you," he said, at last.

"Happen to me?" exclaimed the girl. "Why, aren't you going to look after me? Take me down the moun-

tain, and back to the camp. Mr.—but you haven't told me your name."

"Carter, ma'am," answered the young fellow, gazing dubiously at her; "Kid Carter, they calls me up here. What's yourn?"

"Josephine Cooper," responded the girl, extending her hand. "I am here with the bishop and Captain McCauley and Mr. Barnard from Fort Kinney."

"Oh, they're soldiers, ain't they?" said the young man, taking her dainty hand in his great paw. "Wot are they doin' there?"

"They are out for a little fun."

"That means pluggin' some poor devil like me, I suppose," grimly answered Mr. Carter.

"No, no; merely a hunting and fishing expedition," interrupted Miss Cooper. "Why, do you fear them?"

"I ain't afeard of no one," said the man, proudly. "Only——"

"Look here, Kid," interrupted another voice, "what in blazes hev you got here?"

A shocky, villainous-looking ruffian, dressed in rude garments of home-made manufacture, but armed like the cowboy, suddenly appeared on the trail.

"Good Lord, it's a feemale woman! How did you git her? Say, where did you come from, sis?"

He slouched forward, and peered insolently into her face. She sprang to her feet instantly, shrinking nearer to Kid Carter, who instinctively placed himself between the two.

"Who is this person?" indignantly asked the girl.

"Pusson!" roared the other man, throwing back his head and laughing viciously, "pusson, eh? I'm a gent, I'll hev you understand, as has killed four men to his two."

"A murderer!" cried the girl, and then, suddenly turning to Carter, she asked him, "Is it true? Are you a——?"

"Murderer?" interrupted the second man. "We're all murderers up here, or horse-thieves, or else we've done time, an' the law wants us, or——"

"What is this place?" asked the girl, faintly.

"It's called 'Hell Hole,'" answered Kid Carter, biting his lip and blushing, violently.

"Yes, that's what we call it," interrupted the other man, again. "My name's Hollis, Pete Hollis. 'Three-fingered Pete,'" he added, holding up his left hand, "'cause I got this one cut off in a little round-up with a gent, w'ich I blowed the top of his head off to let some light inter his brains, so he wouldn't tackle a man like me. An' this pocket w'ich we calls 'Hell Hole' belongs to us, me an' some gents below. We diskivered it, an' we keeps open house fer everybody that's in trouble, ye know, as is wanted by a sheriff or the military, or anythin' like that. The way you come is the only way in, an' nobody that comes in goes out ag'in. See that little rock pile there? We've allus got a man there keepin' watch. We kin hold this place against a thousand men. All we've got to do is to draw a bead with a rifle when we hears any one comin', an' blaze away. They can't only come one at a time, an' we allus settles the fust one afore t'other gits around."

"But those houses down there?"

"You don't think we live like Injuns in tepees, do ye? We farm a little down there, jist enough to keep us in grub. Why, we've got a society, family life, down there. Women—I'll interduce you to 'em. Wot are you in here fer?"

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the girl to the cowboy. "Take me away from here!"

"Don't you move, Carter," cried the other man, covering him with his Winchester. "I got the drop on ye. I'd be justified in blowin' yer brains out, Carter, fer these interestin' proceedin's. But you're a tenderfoot here, an' don't know the rules of the range. Everything wot comes in here has to go to the captain for his inspection. If you claims the girl, you kin do it down there, though I don't reckon the claim'll hold good, seein's I come on the scene. Go on down that trail; you foller him, miss; your horse'll come along, I reckon."

"But if I refuse to go?" asked the girl.

"I'll let daylight through him," roared Hollis, pointing to Carter.

"Don't mind me," said that young man, smiling up at her. "I wouldn't mind it. I was a fool to let him git the drop on me. It's all in a day's work."

"Have you killed a man, too?" she asked, looking at him in a daze while he stood silently before her.

"Of course, or he wouldn't be up here," said Hollis. "Now, stop this palaverin', an' mosey."

The descent into the valley was neither long nor difficult. At the foot of the trail there was an open clearing, on one side of which, under some beautiful old trees, stood a rude house. Two or three men were lounging on the porch in front of it, playing cards. A slatternly woman, who had once been pretty, was standing in the doorway.

"Hello, Pete!" cried one of the men, "what hev you got there?"

"A woman, by jinks!" exclaimed one man, looking up from the cards.

"An' a stunner!" cried a second. "Hev you killed yer man, or wot are ye up here fer?"

"Welcome to 'Hell Hole,' madam", said another, who seemed of a higher grade than the others.

"Sirs," instantly said Josephine, with a shudder, "I am a member of a hunting party on the other side of the mountains, and lost my way in the rain and mist. I don't know how I got here. I wish some one to show me the way back to my camp."

"Captain," cried Hollis, springing forward, "she hadn't ought to be let go. Let her stay here; I'll take keer of her."

"You will, eh?" said the semi-respectable individual addressed as "captain." "Well, who found her?"

"I did," said Carter; "she come up the trail on my watch, an' I rounded her up."

"Didn't look much like roundin' up to me," said Hollis, savagely. "W'en I saw 'em she was a-settin' on the ground eatin' his sandwiches, an' he

was a-talkin' to her as peaceful an' lamblike——"

"She is my captive," said Carter, stubbornly. "I found her—I took her; I could hev shot her all right. I'd drawed a bead on her w'en she rounded that curve, but I seen she was a woman. I made her git off her horse. We come here. She's my captive. Ain't you, miss?"

He shot one appealing glance at her. The girl was in a frightful situation. What she should do she could not imagine. There was something, however, in Mr. Carter's look that promised hope. If she read him aright he was willing and anxious to help her. Moistening her lips she answered, staking all upon his worthiness:

"Yes, he caught me."

"But," said Hollis, starting forward, his face flushing, "she's mine. I want her, an' I'm goin' to have her."

"Get back, you dog!" said the captain, whipping out his own gun, and covering Hollis with it; "you don't seem to know how to treat a lady. Don't you lift a finger, or I'll blow your brains out. Madam," he said, turning to the girl, "my name is Bell—John Bell. I was once a surgeon in the United States army. I had a—er—little difficulty with a man down in Laramie, and I—in short—I killed him, and had to pull my freight. That's how I come to be here. Have no fear. You shall be safe."

"Thank you," cried the girl, a gleam of relief appearing in her face; "thank you."

"She's mine, I tell you," said Carter, sullenly. "I got her, an' by the laws you made me sign to last week w'en I fust come here, the disposin' of her belongs to me."

"He's right, captain."

"The Kid's kerrect, old man," cried one of the ruffians.

"Law is law," added another.

It seemed strange to hear these outlawed men pleading the power of the law. The captain looked anxious. Suddenly, his face fell upon the form of Hollis.

"What are you skulking here for,

you hound!" he shouted. "Are you not on watch? Get back to the trail; the whole United States army might be pouring through that pass, for all you know! Up there, lively!"

Hollis turned instantly, and started on a run up the road, pursued by the angry shouts of the rest of the gang, who were profoundly incensed at him for his absence, for their safety depended upon their rigid control of that pass.

The place was a city of refuge for all the scoundrels of the Northwest. It had been held inviolate for a dozen years by the prowess of the men who found shelter there. It was impossible to enter the "pocket" except through that dangerous pass. Sheriffs had tried it, mobs of indignant cattle-owners had attempted it, even the United States army had essayed it, but with no success whatever. When a man got in there he was safe from punishment, so long as he stayed there, provided, of course, that he were able to get along with the other outlaws and desperadoes who lived there.

"Madam," said Bell, "what the Kid says is right. That's the law of this place. We're all outlaws, but we have learned from that very fact that we must have some law or we can't live. You belong to him. But, hark ye, Kid Carter, if you harm that young woman, by God, look to it! I'll shoot you on sight! Who is with your party, madam?"

"Captain McCauley and the bishop—"

"If you ever get out of here alive, and if you ever see them again," continued the doctor, "give my compliments to McCauley, and tell him I'm living in Hell—" He paused just long enough before he added the word "Hole" to make his meaning apparent to her.

"Ma'am," said Carter, "the sooner we git out of here, the better."

"What are you going to do with her?" asked Bell.

"Take her back to her camp."

"Wot!" cried one of the men, "you're goin' to leave the 'Hole'?"

"I am."

"Well, it's your own risk," said another; "doggone it, I'd not do it fer no woman!"

"Are you comin' back, Kid?"

"If I kin git back," said the young man.

"Bring some coffee, Nell," cried the doctor to the woman in the door, a lady who had made way with her husband. "I'm sorry we have no sugar at present," he added, handing it to Josephine; "we mostly take things black and strong in here. Have you had a bite to eat?"

"All I wanted," answered the girl, drinking her coffee, the stimulating effect of which she thought would be valuable to her.

"Allow me," continued the doctor, as Carter led up the horse, which had been refreshed by a good drink of water, and had been cropping the grass. He lifted her to the saddle with perfect ease and grace. "It's a long time," he said, softly, "since I have met a lady, and I wish to God—but this is part of the punishment."

Carter seized the bridle, turned the horse about, and they went up the trail, leaving the captain and one or two of his associates, who emulated his movement, standing bareheaded behind them. They went along for some distance without saying a word. Carter plodded moodily ahead, and the horse followed steadily after. It was the woman who broke the silence.

"Mr. Carter," she said, softly.

There was no answer.

"Mr. Carter," louder.

Still no answer.

"Mr. Carter!"

"Well, wot is it?" he said, gruffly, at last, not looking at her.

"Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"What those men said. Are you—?"

"Yes, every one of us."

"It can't be possible! And you are—?"

"You see, ma'am," said the young man, stopping and turning to her, his face flushed, "it was this way. He

done me dirt, an' 'most broke me down in Laramie. Filled me with bad whiskey, an', w'en he got me drunk, robbed me of my money at kyards. Then I up and plugged him full of holes. The sheriff tried to take me, an'—an' I laid him out, too."

"And all this for a sum of money?"

"It didn't belong to me," explained Carter; "it belonged to the Cross Bar Cattle Company. I was fetchin' it from the bank fer the old man to pay the hands with—a whole lot of it, too. I wish to God I hadn't shot him. Savin' a drunk now an' then, an' a gamble w'en I had the money, I've lived clean an' straight, as punchers go. But that was onct too often. I didn't mean to shoot the sheriff, noway."

"Then what happened?" asked the girl.

There was something so boyish and frank about the young man, and she had gone through so much that day, she had seen him against such a background of utter blackguardism and crime in the persons of the others, that she scarcely realized the enormity of his offense.

"Then, I broke away fer this place. It's knowed all over the West. If you onct git in here you're safe so long as you stay here. It's well named, ain't it?—to turn a paradise into Hell Hole by interducin' men like them."

"Do you have to stay here all your life?"

"I ain't goin' to stay here ten minutes."

"How is that?"

"I'm goin' to take you back to the camp."

"Couldn't I find my way back alone?"

"Not in a thousand years."

"And after that?"

"I'll come back here."

"Oh, don't!" cried the girl.

"Where else kin I go? If I left here I'd git ketched an' jugged, an' tried, an', as the evidence is plain, I'd swing fer it. I'm young yet. I ain't quite sick of this place. They do git tired of it sometimes an' break out, no matter wot happens, but I kin stand it a

little longer. Gosh! it'll be horrible when you're gone—it sure will. Old Doc Bell said it had been years—I heard him—since he spoke to a lady. I ain't never spoke to one since I left my mother, before this mornin'; leastways, no one like you. Don't be skeered," he added, as he saw a strange look sweep over her face; "I won't hurt you."

"I'm not in the least alarmed, Mr. Carter; I trust you implicitly."

"Say, don't call me 'Mr. Carter'; it seems strange like, an' as if you was a judge or a court, or somethin'. Everybody calls me Kid."

"Very well, then. I'm not a bit afraid of you, Kid. I know you will take me safely back to the camp. You were ready to protect me a moment since."

"I'd like to see any one lay a finger on you; it would 'a' been the last of him," said the man, in the most matter-of-fact way.

"Thank you," said the girl.

"Say, miss, put it there," he said, innocently, extending his hand.

Without a moment's hesitation, she put her own hand within his. He shook it vigorously a second time. By this time they had come to the curve of the mountains where the pass narrowed, and where the watchman was stationed. Hollis stood there, gun in hand, looking as ugly as might be expected from one of his calibre.

"I've got to leave you to go alone a bit," whispered Carter; "I've got to take keer of that man. Ride around that bend. I'll cover you an' follow you."

The girl obediently urged her horse forward, although all her terror came back to her as the animal slowly edged its way around the narrow trail over the yawning abyss. Behind her, with his back toward her and his face toward Hollis, his gun in his hand, stumbled Kid Carter, and she heard him say, as she turned the corner:

"Don't make no move with that gun of yours, Hollis, or I'll let daylight through you, an' they'll need another man to watch this pass."

"Are you goin' down with that woman?" asked Hollis.

"I am; what's that to you?"

"Well, you're a fool!" snarled the other man. "I don't need to waste my shot on you. You'll be dancin' on nothin' in Laramie in a few days."

"That's my business."

"Yours and the sheriff's," laughed the other.

"An' I warns you to stay right here where you are, fer the present," said Carter, paying no attention to this jeering remark. "If you pokes your nose around that bend of rock, I'll make a target of it. An' I'll aim to kill, too."

Another moment and he had slipped around the cliff and stood by her side. She had caught only a portion of the conversation, but it had been enough for her.

"There is no danger to you, is there?"

"No," answered the man, lying with the grace and ease of a gentleman. "They don't know me down there; that is, they don't know wot I've done or that I've put fer this country, an' if you don't tell 'em, I kin git back all right."

"If I don't tell? Is that kind? I trusted you; can't you trust me?"

"I kin," answered Carter, instantly. "But it's gittin' late, an' we've got to hurry up. We won't git to that camp till long after dark, as it is. I wisht I had a pony."

He seized the bridle, and pushed rapidly down the trail.

"Why don't you reform, and try to make something out of yourself?" asked the girl, when they had crossed the dangerous part of the pass, and conversation was more easy.

"Reform? Where'd I go to reform? Do you think anybody could reform in that hole?"

"Can't you get away somewhere—where people do not know you?"

It never occurred to the girl that she was actually making herself accessory after the fact to a murder, or, at any rate, to the murderer—compounding a felony, as it were!

"I ain't got no money noway to help

me along," continued the cow-boy. "The whole country south between the railroad an' here is on the lookout fer me."

The girl put her hand into the bosom of her dress, and pulled out a small purse. Before she could say a word, or even extend her hand, he stopped her.

"Put that up! I ain't that low."

"I know you're not, but——"

"How much hev you there?" he asked, comprehending the small capacity of the dainty affair in a glance.

"Four or five dollars, but I can get plenty more."

"That wouldn't carry me a hundred miles, an' if you had a million I wouldn't take it. I ain't that mean. No use of your talkin', miss; I drew these cards, an' I've got to play this hand out, wotever it is."

There was something so hopeless about the situation in which her sympathies were so profoundly enlisted, that the girl was filled with dismay. There did not seem to be any subject upon which they could converse, and they journeyed forward thereafter in silence, broken only by his warnings and her infrequent questions. Carter seemed to know the lay of the land fairly well.

"I have hunted in it, hunted them fellers," he said, in answer to a question. "In '92 I was one of a posse that tried to clean out that pocket back there—that infernal gang; I beg your pardon, ma'am—so I knows this country pretty well. They keep another lookout above that place where I was keepin' watch, an' we've knowed all about your party for days. Some of the gang was fer goin' down an' raidin' the camp, but didn't dare; there was too many men in the party."

The girl shuddered at the possibility the man's simple speech conjured up in her mind. They had been so entirely peaceful in the camp, never dreaming of danger of any kind.

The two had progressed several miles, when, suddenly coming around a gigantic butte, which Josephine thought she recognized, and which was indeed

the one that had afforded her shelter from the cyclone, they had a fair view of the whole eastern slope of the mountains. Away off in the distance lay the white tents of the camp.

It was now late in the afternoon, and the girl could not possibly reach it before dark; but she instantly turned to Carter, who stood by her side, surveying the prospect.

"There is the camp," she said.

"I see it."

"I can make my way there now, I think, without your assistance."

"It'll be dark long afore you git there," returned the man. "I'm goin' with you."

She endeavored to dissuade him, but could not move him. They went forward more rapidly, after that; as rapidly, indeed, as the man could keep pace with the horse, and it was not until late in the evening that they found themselves on a bit of level ground, perhaps half a mile of prairie, with the trees at the other end, which alone shut out a view of the camp. Off to one side, they could hear the rush of the river. Scarcely had they progressed a quarter of the way down the open, when a little party of horsemen entered it behind them. As soon as these caught sight of Josephine and her companion they shouted loudly to attract their attention.

"Oh!" cried the girl, turning her horse, "there's the bishop!" as she recognized a little, stout man at the head of the party. "And there's Captain McCauley and—Mr. Barnard."

"Who are the others?" asked Carter, whipping out his gun. He stood poised on his foot, as if to run. "Those are your friends; but that other man, an' them with him; I reckon they're lookin' fer me."

"What do you mean?"

"That's the sheriff of Johnston county, an' that's his posse. They've been huntin' me, an' your friends hev pressed them inter service to hunt you. It's all up with me, but I'm glad you're safe."

"But you will be taken!" cried the girl; "they will——"

"No matter."

"Wait!"

Disengaging her feet from the stirrups, she sprang to the ground, instantly.

"Take my horse!" she gasped.

"Quick! You saved me, I'll save you."

The man hesitated.

"Go!" she urged.

It was the work of a second for him to unbuckle the saddle, and throw it aside. Gathering the reins in his hand, he leaped to the back of the big cavalry horse.

"Good-bye!" cried the girl, lifting her hand.

They were very near now, but he pulled off his sombrero, bent low over the saddle, seized her hand and pressed a long kiss upon it.

"If I'd 'a' met you afore," he cried,

"I might hev been a different man."

The party was close at hand. Still holding his cocked pistol, Carter put the spur into the horse. He started off on a gallop instantly toward the other end of the glade.

"Josephine!" cried the bishop, as they approached, "are you safe? We have been searching for you all day."

"Entirely so," answered the girl, "thanks to that man," pointing to the rapidly disappearing figure.

"Who is he?" asked Barnard, jealously, as he dismounted and took her hand. "I've been wild with——"

"By gosh, I know him!" exclaimed the sheriff. "That's my man. That's Kid Carter!—him we've come to ketch, boys. After him!"

He lifted his Winchester as he spoke, and leveled it at the fleeing man. The girl rushed toward the sheriff, frantically waving her hands and screaming. The startled horse jumped aside, the gun went off, and the bullet sped harmlessly down the valley. But, by this time, other rifles were cracking; she could not attend to them all, and one shot hit the old troop horse. He jumped into the air and fell. Carter, revolver in hand, was off him in a minute, making for the woods near the river bank amid a fusillade of bullets. Josephine Cooper, who had stood ap-

palled at first, now ran into the open between the posse and the fugitive, her arms extended as if to protect him. She might as well have tried to check a whirlwind, for they brushed her aside without a second's hesitation, and galloped forward, firing as they ran. The cruel joy of a man hunt was with them. They were good shots in that posse. Carter suddenly staggered and fell just as they reached him. He lay on the ground, his revolver still clenched in his hand.

"Be careful, boys," said the sheriff, riding up; "he's got his gun with him yet."

"You needn't be afraid," gasped out the Kid, dropping the weapon, "I won't shoot. I don't want no more blood on my hands. Where's the lady?"

"Here," answered Josephine, forcing her way through the men; "are you much hurt?"

"I'm done for, this time. Say, I'm glad I don't hev to go back to that place."

"What does he mean?" asked the sheriff.

"That pocket in the mountains, you know," said the girl, stooping down and slipping her arm under the dying man's head; "I ventured in there in the storm——"

"Good gosh! have you been in Hell Hole," said the sheriff, "and got out alive?"

"Yes, thanks to him. He claimed me, and brought me here at the risk of his life."

"Kid," said the sheriff, stooping down and taking the man's hand, "that was white of you. If I'd known that, I'd be blamed if I'd 'a' shot at you! Eh, boys?"

"It's just as well," said the Kid, faintly. "Thank you, ma'am; I'm

glad I done it. Is that the bishop you was talkin' about? I have been a bad boy, bishop. But seein's I'm knocked out this time, don't you think I'll git a show when I'm gone over the range?"

"You gave your life for another, for this girl, my boy," said the old man, kneeling down by him. "It was a sacrifice, an atonement. 'Greater love,' said Jesus, 'hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

"An' I didn't shoot the posse when I might hev. I wanted as clean a hand as I could carry now. I'm sorry to have all this unpleasant business a-doo-in' afore you, miss; I sure am. It's growing dark mighty sudden, ain't it? It must be gittin' late. I'm not afraid to die if you think I hev a chance."

"Yes, yes," cried the girl, "I'm sure of it."

"I've been in hell onct to-day," he gasped out, "an' in heaven, too." He smiled up at her. "Would you lemme kiss your hand ag'in afore——?"

The girl glanced interrogatively at Barnard. There was no need of explanation between these two at this time. She knew that he loved her and he knew that she loved him, and the petty quarrel was composed in the shadow of the death-angel's wing. Then, she bent her head, lifted Carter's head a little higher and kissed him on the lips. The smile broadened—it was almost a laugh—then stopped suddenly. It was as if a hand had been passed over his face and smoothed it out.

She laid his head back on the sod, and rose to her feet. The bishop still knelt, praying in the twilight; the others stood around, their hats in their hands.

But poor Kid Carter had gone over the range.



EASILY ACCOMPLISHED

"DID they have any difficulty in getting Smith into the asylum?"

"Oh, no! His wife talked him into it."

LOGICAL

THEY met within the darkened hall;
 He said, "I've brought some roses."
 Her answer seemed irrelevant;
 It was, "How cold your nose is!"

Her answer seemed irrelevant—
 But, when you've recollected,
 Then you can plainly see that it
 Most closely was connected.

ANDY NAME.



A PUZZLE FABLE

AN American Heiress was wooed by a Foreign Prince, who urgently Besought her to become his Wife. In order to Test the Sincerity of his Love, she asked: "Will you still marry me if I Give away All my Money for Charity, and become as Poor as yourself?"

The Prince considered a while, and then Responded: "Yes, provided you will still marry me if I Renounce my Title and become a plain, republican Person like yourself."

QUERY: Did she Agree to his Proposition?



THE SYMPHONY

"SHE is lovely beyond compare," gushed Admiration. "She looks like a dream; her voice is music. She is a human Symphony."

"No doubt, my child," drily answered Experience. "But beware of these dreamy creatures, who look like Symphonies. They are eminently calculated to create discord."



"I HAVEN'T much to offer you, dear—sort of love in a cottage, you know."
 "Why, Jack, I think love in a cottage would be just too sweet for anything! But where would our town house be?"

IN THE CLOISTER OF SAN JUAN

By Thomas Walsh

MOONLIGHT haunts the little garden
In the cloister of San Juan
Where the novice, Seraphita—
She so fair to look upon—
Steals along the fragrant passes
Near the fountains, murmuring low,
Where the lazy harbor slumbers,
And the stars and lamplights glow.
In that garden on the hillside,
There are roses to enslave
Poets' hearts with dreams of beauty
To the threshold of the grave;
Shrines of marble are reflected
In the fountains that never cease,
And the breezes in the trellis
Whisper orisons for peace.
Gently there the youthful novice,
In her cloister-habit white,
Bends to whisper to the roses
Dripping with the dews of night:
"Are you weeping, little sisters?
Is there sorrow in your breast
'Mid the night so calm and saintly
When the weary are at rest?"
And they answer in the moonlight—
For their souls were all her own,
Since they blossomed in her kisses
And had felt her hand alone:
"We are weeping, Seraphita,
O'er the sorrows of the rose."
"Nay, beloved," she makes answer,
"Are your blossoms not of those
Who alone upon the altar
Through the silent night repose,
All your hearts in love consuming
At the threshold of your Lord?"
But they whisper, softly weeping,
"Few there be for such award."
"Nay," she pleads, "if earth so claim you,
There are tokens that enshrine
Love in trothèd maidens' bosoms
With avowal half-divine."
Then they tell her, "Seraphita,
Think not 'tis for them we weep

THE SMART SET

Who, upon the day they blossom,
 At the feet of Jesus sleep;
 Not for them, our little sisters,
 Who on maidens' breasts find grace,
 There to breathe out all their being
 In love's sacrificial place;
 But our tears are falling, falling,
 For the roses that must lie
 All the perfect night on bosoms
 Whence they hearken base reply,
 And on hearts grown deaf and heedless
 To the pleadings roses make—
 Roses that decoy to kisses
 That are poisoned like the snake.
 Yea, we weep our sisters' sorrows—
 Most of all the dumb despair
 Of the rose upon the bosom
 Set for love that is not there."
 Then—so runs the simple legend—
 There came fear within the eyes
 Of the novice, Seraphita,
 As she listened to their sighs—
 Heard, or felt, their meaning vaguely,
 And with prayer her lips upon,
 Hastened from the witchèd moonlight
 In the cloister of San Juan.



NOT HIS PURPOSE

RUBE (*to Dan, who has just come out of the water into which he had fallen*)—How
 did you come to fall in the river?
 DAN—Didn't come to fall in the river—come to fish.



DOUBLY FOOLISH

GADDS—Why shouldn't a man marry his deceased wife's sister?
 FADDS—That puts him in the clutches of his mother-in-law all over again.



CONGRUITY

HARTH—What was all the uproar about in the women's convention?
 STARK—They were having an argument as to which of the candidates
 should receive the loving-cup.

JANE'S GENTLEMAN

By Owen Oliver

I PUT up with a good deal of Jane's carelessness, without saying anything; but, when she mislaid the clothes-basket, I had to speak about it. When I find fault with her she generally argues; but, on this occasion, she only sighed.

"I've got something on my mind, Miss Molly," she said. "That's where it is."

"No, it isn't. It's on the dining-room table."

She stopped in the middle of washing a tea-cup, and dropped it. Luckily, it only fell in the water.

"That jest shows!" she exclaimed.

"It shows that you are very thoughtless."

"Ah!" She shook her head. "You ain't old enough to understand."

"I am fourteen," I reminded her. I have kept house ever since mother died; and I understand more than Jane does.

"I don't deny," she admitted, as you've got sense for your age; but there's some things wot you 'ave to go through to know about." She sighed again, and nearly let a jug slip.

"You will break something in a minute," I warned her. "I have been through *that*! Why don't you attend to what you are doing?"

"I ain't got no 'eart for washin' up."

She sat down on a chair, and wiped her eyes with her apron. So, I took the tea-cloth, and began drying the things; but she jumped up and snatched it away.

"You ain't goin' to do the work wot I'm paid for," she said, "not while I got strength to stand—wot won't be long!"

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I nearly laughed. There is nothing the matter with Jane except her appetite—it is enormous.

"What is wrong, Jane?" I asked.

"It's a—a gen'l'man."

I think she blushed; but she is naturally red, so you can never be sure.

"What gentleman?"

"One wot 'as been after me."

"After you?"

"Payin' 'is attentions, as the master calls it in them 'ere stories."

My father is Frank Marchant, the famous author. He writes stories, and sells them—at least, he sells some of them. He would sell them all if editors had literary taste.

"Has he left off paying them?" I inquired.

"Left off! Not 'im."

"Then, why aren't you satisfied?"

She walked over to the dresser, and hung up some cups.

"I ain't good enough for 'im," she said, "an' that's gospel truth. 'E's a perfick gen'l'man, that's wot 'e is. An' as for eddication! Why, 'e can write a letter as easy as kiss my 'and!"

"Does he kiss your hand often?"

"I'd like to ketch 'im!"

"I thought when people were—were 'paying attentions'—"

Jane laughed, scornfully. "'Ands wasn't made for kissin'," she said. I do not think Jane's were!

"No-o. What is he like?"

She started cleaning the fender. "There ain't nothink the matter with 'is looks."

"Is he tall?"

"'Bout middlin'."

"And handsome?"

"A proper figger of a man, I call 'im."

"Dark or fair?"

"You might say as 'e's fair, considerin' 'is 'air is lightish. Some people sez as it's red." She scowled at the fireplace. "Pack of nonsense! An' if it *was* red, wot 'ud it matter? It's 'is ways wot I look to."

"Of course. What is his name?"

"You ain't 'alf inquisitive!"

"Don't be rude, Jane," I said, severely. I am not at all inquisitive; but I like to know about things.

"Well," she said, "it's Claude Montmorency. It was partly the name wot I took to."

I thought that "Mrs. Claude Montmorency" would sound funny for Jane, but I did not say so. Father says that tact is another name for holding one's tongue.

"It ain't nothink to 'is manners," she assured me. "You should 'ear 'im say 'Good evenin', Miss De Vere,' when I—" She stopped suddenly, and turned so very red that I knew she was blushing.

"Miss De Vere!" I looked at her.

"Oh, Jane!"

"Ow could I tell 'im a name like 'Arris?"

"You'll have to tell him sooner or later."

"There's lots of things I'll 'ave to tell 'im sooner or later. That's wot's on my mind." She wiped her eyes.

"You haven't been passing yourself off for somebody else?" She nodded. "It isn't right."

She put the fender down with a bang.

"I never said as it was. . . . Wish I 'adn't never been born."

I knew it was very wrong, and I ought to have been cross with her; but she began crying dreadfully, so I couldn't. Jane is a great worry to me; but she means well.

"What have you told him?" I asked.

"More'n I can remember. An' bound to go an' contradic' myself some time or other. I said as I was companion to a lady, wot treated me like one of the fambly; an' 'ad expectations from my uncle—wot I 'adn't never none; an' as I could play the pianner beautiful, an' sing. Some of them

songs of yours an' the master's I tole 'im, like 'Jerusalem, wot Slayest the Profits,' an' 'Oner 'er 'Arms.' They're classy ones, ain't they?"

"Ye-es," I agreed; "I think they are." I am afraid they are not Jane's class!

"An' as I knowed French." I could not help laughing. "Well, I 'ave learned a bit, from 'earin' you teach the boys." I try to help them with their home lessons; but I am afraid my own pronunciation is not very good.

"An' 'ad late dinner, I said, an' *bête noir* afterward."

"*Bête noir!*" I cried. "What do you mean?"

"Coffee without milk, you said it was."

"Er—yes." She meant *café noir*, of course!

"An' as I'd been to Paris, an' seed the Bridge of Sighs there, wot 'e 'adn't noticed. So I 'ad the best of 'im for once. I seed it at the Exhibition, wot master give me an' my sister tickets for, you remember." She was thinking of Venice, of course. "I got a rare good mem'ry, excep' for 'ixin' up things."

"Ye-es. If I were you, I shouldn't tell him any more things that aren't—that you haven't seen."

"No more I ain't goin' to; but that won't call back wot I've told 'im already."

"Perhaps he'll forget, if you don't say any more about them."

She shook her head. "Not 'im. 'E's an orful one for recollectin'. Arst me twice last evenin' about Lord Blackfriars."

"About *whom?*"

She pretended to be looking for something in the cupboard. "Another gen'l'man, wot was after me, I said."

"Oh, Jane! how *could* you?"

"Didn't want 'im to think as I was goin' too cheap. Made 'im rare wild, anyhow. 'E said as 'e'd knock 'is 'ead off for tuppence; an' no lords wasn't never to be trusted—wot I knew, of course, an' ev'rybody does."

Jane knows all about lords—in nov-ellettes.

"What are you going to do now?" I inquired.

"That's wot I was goin' to arsk you, seein' as you're a sharp un, if you ain't no age." I shook my head. "Suppose as you was in my place?"

"I should not have told him such things."

I do not mean ever to fall in love; but, if I did, I should want him to like me just as I was, and not because I was something else that I wasn't.

"But supposin' you 'ad?"

"Then, I should tell him the truth."

She dropped the broom with a bang. "It ain't never no good askin' people for advice," she grumbled. "They always tell you wot you know; an' ain't goin' to do; an' they wouldn't neither. My aunt sez, wot you've 'eard me speak of—"

"I must go and dust the bedrooms," I said, hastily. I think Jane has told me all that her aunt has ever said; and she cannot work when she is talking.

Jane did not mention the gentleman again till she came in next evening. It was her night out, and I was in the kitchen making the coffee.

"Ere," she said, "I'll do that." She hates to see me work, but I do not mind. "Do me good to take my mind off things." I could see that she had been crying.

"Have you quarreled?" I inquired.

"No one couldn't quarrel with 'im. 'E's too much of a gen'l'man. An' 'e sez—'e sez—" She put her head down on the table, and her shoulders shook dreadfully. I was so sorry for her.

"What did he say?" I thought she wanted to tell me, or I should not have asked.

"As I was a perfick little lady; an' that was why 'e thought so much of me. Oh, oh!" She rocked herself to and fro. "In course, I 'ad my gloves on; an' this 'at wot you chose for me, an' said yourself was 'refined.' I was glad I didn't 'ave that one with the big feather, 'cause 'e can't abear 'em, 'e sez. I done my best to speak quiet and proper—I done my best!"

"You speak much better lately," I

told her. "There, there! Don't cry, there's a dear."

"I think of things more'n I did, don't I, Miss Molly?"

"Much more," I agreed. I am afraid it was not quite true, because I had found the coffee in the tea-cannister; but I did not wish to upset her. "Your writing is improving, too." I was setting her copies.

"I'll get done early ev'ry day, an' do some more," she declared. "An', p'r'aps, 'e won't find out about my writin'. But I'll never be a scholar like 'e is."

Jane was very good all the rest of the week. I had to stop her from hitting Bob and Tommy on Saturday; but they had been calling her "Lady Jane," so I could not blame her, really.

She came to ask me if she was "all right," before she went out on Sunday. She wore the "refined" hat, and a new jacket. Father had sold several tales, so I had been able to pay up her wages. She has rather a pretty face, and she was much quieter and paler than usual. So, she really did look almost ladylike.

She was paler still when she came in, and hardly spoke. When I went up to bed, there was a light in her room, and I went in. She was sitting on the edge of the bed, with all her things on, looking at nothing. I sat down beside her, and put my arm around her.

"Poor old Jane!" I whispered.

"I can't go on like this any longer," she told me. "I can't, Miss Molly. I don't mean to see 'im any more. Lies is good enough for some people; but there's some as you can't bear tellin' 'em to. An' one thing leads to another, an', when you've begun, you 'ave to go on with it. There's more as I tole 'im to-night; an' could 'ave bit my tongue out."

"Tell him the truth," I begged. "Say that you did it because you—liked him. He'll forgive you then. I would."

"You are a little angel on earth." She put her head down on my shoulder. "An' 'e's only a man—though 'e's a gen'l'man."

It always makes me feel deceitful

when people think I am good, because I know how cross I feel sometimes; but, of course, I try not to show it.

"Men who are kind are kinder than women," I told her. "If he is like father, he will be very nice to you."

"E won't. An' if 'e did, 'e'd look down on me all the rest of my life. It's no good arguin'. I won't do it. I won't!"

"Then what will you do?"

She caught hold of my wrist so tightly that it hurt.

"I'm goin' to—break it off."

"He'll ask the reason."

"E won't 'ave the chance. I'm goin' to write to 'im. You'll 'elp me with the spellin', won't you?"

"It would be better for you to see him."

She laughed a funny laugh. "People don't always do wot's best for themselves. I'm goin' to do wot's best for 'im. I ain't good enough for 'im, Miss Molly; an' I ain't goin' to give 'im no chance of makin' a fool of 'isself, as 'e'd be sorry for afterward. Only, I don't want 'im to think too 'ard of me. If somebody would say a word for me—somebody wot 'ad the gift of persuadin' people!" She looked at me, appealingly.

"Father?" I suggested. Father is very clever, as well as good, and knows how to say things so that they seem different.

"You!" she said.

I drew a deep breath. "I can't say things like father can."

"You'll say the kindest things of me of anybody. You will, won't you, Miss Molly?"

"Yes, dear," I promised. "I will if you wish it. Now, go to bed."

I helped her to get to bed, and I turned down the gas, and went to the door. Then, I went back and kissed her. I knew that, if I were in trouble, she would be kind to me.

She wrote a lot of letters on Monday, and tore them up. Then, I wrote one for her. The spelling was quite right, because I looked out all the long words in the dictionary, and I took great

pains with the writing; but she tore it up, like the others.

"It's a beautiful letter, Miss Molly," she said, "but it ain't mine. I won't make no pretense any more. He shall see as I ain't no account at spellin' or writin'. I won't go for to deceive 'im again." And the letter that she wrote was this:

DEAR CLORD:

I've bin deseavin you. I am not eny ladie an never wasnt, only a girle. An I tole you lise an am awful ashamed of myself. But it wasnt no lise that I loved you and shant never care like it for nowun els.

Dear Clord I am not good enuf for you an your best without me so I wont never sea you eny mor an havent put the adres. Plese forgit alle about me but remember me sumtimes. So no mor at present or never.

From your fren,

JANE HARRIS.

P. S. I called myself Evlin de Vere.

P. S. Good-by! I am verry sorry for wat I done.

P. S. This is finel but dont think to hard of me.

Mr. Montmorency was to meet her by Lion Square, at seven on Tuesday evening, and I agreed to take the letter instead. I should know him, she told me, by his wearing a check cap, and carrying a cane with a gold knob. "Most like 'e'll be whistlin' 'Sally in Our Alley,' or 'Vi'lets,'" she added, as she saw me off at the door. "Sez it sets 'im whistlin' when 'e thinks of me! An' you'll tell 'im as I was orful sorry—You needn't worrit about me. I'll be 'avin' a fine game with the boys. I'm comin', Master Tommy. You—you'll speak kind of me, won't you, Miss Molly? I'll be better as soon as you've gone."

I thought she would, so I went. I cried a little, myself; but I was all right when I reached the square.

There was nobody there but a round-faced, grinning young man with a reddish mustache. He was walking up and down, and looking around as if he expected somebody. When he passed me for the third time, I noticed that he was whistling "Violets;" and he had a cane with a yellow knob, and a checked cap. It flashed across me that he was

Jane's gentleman; and he wasn't a gentleman at all!

He caught me looking at him, and stopped; and I stopped, too. Then, he saw the letter in my hand.

"Begg'n' your pardon, miss," he said. "Do you 'appen to 'ave a message from Miss de Vere?"

"You are Mr. Montmorency?"

"That's me. Ain't nothink the matter with 'er, is there?"

"She is well, but—" I stopped because I did not know what to say.

"Can't she come?"

"No-o. At least, she thought it better not to. There has been a misunderstanding about—your relative social position." I had made up my mind that this was a good way to put it.

"Ah!" he said; "so *that's* it?"

"Of course, position isn't everything. You may think it doesn't matter." He seemed a nice young man, but I did not think he was too gentlemanly for Jane.

He shook his head. "It matters a good deal."

"If you think that," I said, "I need not say any more." I was disappointed in him.

"Doesn't *she* think it matters?" he asked.

"Ye-es; but if you tried to persuade her——"

"Not me," he said, decidedly. "She's quite right—I don't deserve 'er."

"I don't think you do," I told him. "She is a very good girl."

"Girl!" he cried. "She's a lady, ev'ry inch of 'er!"

I looked at him in astonishment.

"Then, why don't you marry her?" I asked.

He stared at me. "I'll tell you, missie," he said, slowly. "It won't make me feel no worse'n I've felt this last three weeks. It's because she's a lady—an' I ain't."

"No-o," I agreed; "of course not!"

"But I tried to pass myself off as

one—I mean a gen'l'man. An' she's foun' me out."

"But, Mr. Montmorency——"

He held up his hand. "That ain't my right name. It's 'Ammond—Bill 'Ammond. An' I ain't no gen'l'man, but in the greengrocery line. It ain't a bad bus'ness for the likes of me; an' I got a real good little moke of my own; but I could see as it wouldn't do for the likes of 'er. So I tole 'er—lies. I ain't no class, or I wouldn't never 'ave done it. Good night, miss."

He turned, and walked away so quickly that I was out of breath when I caught him.

"You haven't taken your letter," I said, "Mr.—Hammond. The address is Number 4, Elm Grove—the second house around the corner, if you want to see her." Then, I ran away.

Jane was taking the boys up to bed when I got home. I said that I would see to them, and sent her down-stairs. Before she reached the kitchen, I heard a knock at the side-door.

"Who's that?" the boys asked.

I listened for a moment. "Somebody for Jane," I told them. Then, I shut the door, and romped with them. It was great fun; and I laughed so much that I cried!

I did not go down to the kitchen till I heard the side-door close. It was an hour and three-quarters, and a few minutes over. Jane was running between the dresser and the table to get the supper ready, and smiling all over her face.

"The deceit of the man!" she said.

"I give it to 'im proper, I tell you!"

"Oh!" I said; "then it's all off, I suppose?"

Jane grinned.

"You don't suppose nothink of the sort," she said. "An'—an' God bless you, Miss Molly, dear!"

She flung her arms suddenly around me, and kissed me. It was a great liberty—but I did not mind!

THE surest way to alter the sentiment of people who complain that they never get what they deserve would be to give it to them once.

July 1903

A SUMMER SIREN

WE met beside the ocean,
 In bathing-suits attired;
 She smiled on my devotion,
 I worshiped—and aspired.
 My cup with joy was brimming
 When she permitted me
 To teach her fancy swimming,
 And thanked me graciously.

It did not stop at diving
 And sunning on the sand;
 I dared to take her driving,
 And even squeezed her hand.
 I dreamed that in the city
 My love I might declare,
 And look with scornful pity
 On all her suitors there.

But, lo! when I intruded
 In her Manhattan set,
 I might have been included
 With those she'd never met.
 The story needs no trimming—
 I learned the difference grim
 "Twixt Dorothy in swimming,
 And Dorry "in the swim."

FRANK ROE BATCHELDER.



THE LAND OF CULTS

CRAWFORD—Why do Boston people seem to have so much individuality?
 CRABSHAW—Perhaps it's because nearly every one you meet up there has a
 different religion.



WHEN Noah completed the (—
 The beasts all made haste to emb—;
 For a free ocean trip
 On a seaworthy ship
 Appealed to them all as a l—.

ENVOY EXTRAORDINARY AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY

By Guy Wetmore Carryl

ROBERT CONSTANCE, U.S.N., walked to the starboard gangway, and yawned without opening his mouth. This useful accomplishment had come to him in the course of much inutile conversation with the lights—and darks—of the United States Consular Service, and he studiously kept in practice. The little ceremony once accomplished, he swung upon his heels, strode to the port gangway, peered down, and swore under his breath, with ingenuity. One thing was evident. Dissatisfaction of some variety was disturbing the accustomed serenity of Robert Constance, U.S.N.

There was nothing, in either his position or his surroundings, to suggest what the cause of this dissatisfaction might be. It was a very enviable position, his, according to the average man's way of thinking, a very enviable position, indeed. Of course, one looks higher than a training-ship, but, on the other hand, there were those of Constance's own class who had been assigned to the *Katahdin*—to which all things are preferable. So, it may be said, without narrow-mindedness, that he was an extremely lucky young man, and that there was small excuse for yawning, and none, whatever for profanity, however ingenious.

The *Springfield* was lying in the harbor of St. Thomas, homeward bound from her Winter training cruise in the Caribbean, and Bobby Constance was officer of the deck. It was a very big, long, broad, clean deck, and on it there were a great many bare-footed young

persons in white duck, who, in due time, might do incalculable damage to others of like calling but different nationality, but who, at present, were chiefly distinguished by an infinite capacity for getting in the way. For an hour past, they had been energetically doing incomprehensible things with ropes and cutlasses and wig-wag flags and pistols and big guns. Now, for the most part, they were sprawling.

A subdued hum, as of a multitude of sleepy bees, hung on the still, hot air. Twenty feet from Constance, a prodigiously fat boatswain presided, as an arbiter of justice, over a dispute between a wizen-faced monkey and a spotted fox-terrier. At the foot of the port gangway, a dozen or more snub-nosed boats bobbed on the choppy water, the boatmen, with big, brass numbers on their straw hats, looking up toward the deck, and screwing up their eyes against the crinkling glitter of the waves, on the lookout for a possible fare. There was a smell of clean duck and newly-washed woodwork and brass polish; and Robert Constance, U.S.N., yawned again, shamelessly, with his mouth wide open, abandoning his former conservatism.

Mecarder was the last man in the world whom he expected to see. But that was the way with Mecarder. He went up and down the earth miscellaneously, finding out things, and cabling them, at impressive expense, to a two-story, triangular building in the heart of New York, whence they issued, next morning, in the form of

double-leaded, front-page articles. After fifteen years of this sort of thing, there was not much left for Mecarder to find out. He knew everything that had already happened, and a respectable number of things that had not, but shortly would. As a result of his methods, when people said, "Mecarder's home again; saw him, week before last," he was, in all probability, engaged in pumping an ambassador at Vienna. When, on the contrary, people said, "Mecarder's in Vienna," he was very apt, at that moment, to be mounting the front steps, intent upon a friendly call. In particular, he was favorably known to the navy, and whoever is favorably known to the navy, has, at one time or another, rather more than his just share of the joys of life. Also, it was true that Mecarder occasionally took a vacation, which was not in the interests of his paper, and still less in his own.

Mecarder stopped his boatman at a little distance, and hailed the deck.

"Who are you?" he shouted. "Can't see you under your helmet."

"Constance," answered the officer of the deck. "Who are you? Oh—well! Good man! Come aboard."

Mecarder swarmed aboard, raising his brand-new panama in salute.

"Let's see," said Bobby, as their hands met, "Singapore, wasn't it, last time? Or, no—Gibraltar! How stupid I am! And I'll confess I'm surprised to see you here."

"You are!" laughed Mecarder. "You ought to know better than to be surprised at anything, where I'm concerned. The mustache is new, isn't it? That's why I didn't recognize you, at first. Who have you?"

"Wisby's the old man. Then, Carruthers—navigating officer, this trip—Henderson, Jimmy Carmichael, Veazey, Torrence, and a couple of others whom you know—we often speak of you—a new paymaster, Brackett—a good chap; and, of course, a pair of sprats, just out—all pin-feathers, as yet. What's the game now? Or is this another time when you're 'not at liberty to tell'?"

"Oh, nothing much. A bit of a vacation, that's all—looking up the flora, fauna, opinions of the natives, and so forth. I came down two weeks ago on the *Madiana*. Saw you passing in, yesterday morning; I was on Buck Island, shooting. So, I've come out, hoping to find some of the old gang aboard. You're from St. Croix?"

"Yes—going home. From here to Culebra, Puerto Rico, Havana perhaps, and then—God's country."

"Well, I'll be sending my card to the captain. See you later."

That night, at dinner in the ward-room of the *Springfield*, Mecarder gave an account of himself. He was extraordinarily attached to these earnest, clean-cut, confident men, who led a life as roving as his own, and made all things possible for Uncle Sam. It sent a little, pleasurable thrill, unobtainable elsewhere, down his spinal marrow to drink in response to their gladness at seeing him aboard. In this toast, there was no lack of sincerity on either side. Mecarder had done, and would do, much for the navy, and the navy was at all times prepared and pleased to repay Mecarder in his own good coin.

Now, they were remembering Manila together, to the confusion of the sprats, who supposed themselves important, and secretly resented Mecarder. At the end, the older men were left alone. Carmichael had been singing, and they all joined in the final chorus:

"Am I a man, or am I a tool?"

Am I the governor-general or a hobo?
I'd like to know who's the boss of the show—
Is it Mac or Emilio Aguinaldo?"

"How that brings it all back!" said Mecarder; "only, Bobby ought to be here with his banjo."

Constance was dining ashore.

"Bobby doesn't play the banjo nowadays," said Carruthers, from the head of the table.

A significant little pause followed the remark. The men were very busy with their cigars, of a sudden. Only Mecarder looked up, sharply, searching the faces around him. He was no fool, Jack Mecarder!

"What is it?" he said. "I can hold it as well as the next man. Give up!"

"Oh, we'll give up, readily enough," answered Carruthers. "You're one of us, Jack, as much as if you belonged to the mess; and as for holding things—humph! I should say you could! Well, we're worried about Bobby."

"It isn't money," observed Mecarder, as the other paused. "That I know—the lucky dog! And it isn't rum. He isn't only on the water-cart, that boy—he drives it! Well, who's the girl?"

"A snip of a thing at Barbados," said Carruthers, with a slight smile. "Bobby's gone, clean gone! There was no holding him while we were there. It was shore-leave and evening-dress B. every night. Since we left, he's been mewling like a sick apprentice, neglecting his work, snubbing us right and left, and, in general, behaving abominably."

"What's she like?" prompted Mecarder.

"Oh, pretty. I saw her once, and suspected the tar-brush; though, if I were to say as much to Bobby, he'd probably jump down my throat. Oh, corruption! It makes me sick!"

"It sounds trivial," Veazey took up the story, "but, somehow, there's more to it than flitting fancy, Mecarder. The boy's gone all to wrack. He isn't fit for publication. And that sort of thing gets one in trouble with the department quicker than winking. You know his record. He's been advanced five numbers twice. He's got the kind of thing before him that Dewey has behind—if war holds off long enough, and then comes, and then holds on! We've all been proud of Bobby, and now to have him go to pieces over a—well, for charity's sake, we'll call her a brunette!—is a hard knock. Why, he's—"

Veazey hesitated. "He's talking of quitting!" he blurted out.

"And coming down here to live," supplemented Carruthers; "and I've never known him to bluff. Think of it—Bobby Constance! In ten years,

he'll be chewing cane as a business, and sampling other men's rum by way of relaxation! The question is, who's going to pull him up short, and how?"

Mecarder shrugged his shoulders.

"Don't do that!" protested Carruthers, "because you're elected by acclamation, Jack. When your card came down, Veazey said, 'Here's old Mecarder, come over into Macedonia!' And that's just about right. You know the boy, and all about him. He is never done talking about you. You're the necessary moral whalebone. Why, look here, man, the captain's sour on him—on Bobby! How's that for a transformation scene? The men are grumbling about him. Something's got to be done. When will you do it?"

"To-morrow," said Mecarder, as he took a fresh cigar. "When he gets back to-night, tell him I expect him to lunch with me at Mahoney's at one o'clock—and see to it that the captain lets him come."

Carruthers nodded. Carmichael, in exultation, swung round again to the piano, and immediately his fine, clear tenor filled the ward-room:

"Take me somewheres east of Luzon
Where our worst is like their best,
Where there ain't no sundown liberty,
And a man can wear a vest!"

"That's it!" said Carruthers, in an undertone, "that's IT!"

The next day, at luncheon on the gallery of the Hôtel du Commerce, Mecarder wormed it all out of Bobby Constance. It was Mecarder's business, was worming, and practice had made him perfect.

The gallery was big and tiled and not over-clean, and looked harborward, over the public gardens. There were three tables where was room for thirty. Mahoney himself—the inimitable, the wonderful Mahoney!—served the repast. As ever, his linen was immaculate, his manner the perfection of courtesy, his dark, well-kept hands assiduous in the service of his guests. There were bad bread, indifferent viands and good wine.

Bobby had the worst of the bargain, as not touching the third which made the first two worth while, but he enjoyed himself immensely, and Mecarder enjoyed Bobby even more.

Below them, in the gardens, negro girls, with one eye on the balcony, came to draw water, disputed and chaffed, and departed, buckets on heads, with the long, easy stride to which they were born. A great hum of voices, and the smell of cane and pungent fruits and stale fish, mounted from the square, where market-women squatted in the shade of the white-washed buildings. From a tawdry little café across the way came the tinkle-tinkle of a much-misused piano. Over all brooded an indescribable atmosphere of languor and laziness and indifference, and a suggestion of activity gone, never to return.

"It's *great*, isn't it?" said Bobby, stretching his long legs under the table, luxuriously.

"It is," assented Mecarder; "but what?"

"Oh, the restfulness, the ease, the don't-give-a-damnness of all this. You can't imagine how I love it. Yesterday afternoon, some of us went over to the German company's coaling-station across the harbor there, and the agent—what's his name now? Er-r-r—well, no matter. Anyhow, he showed us all over the place. He has a house that's a picture, and a garden that's a paradise. He takes his meals in the open air, all the year round, and bathes in the bulkiest clear water I've ever seen or hope to see—with wire netting all around, to keep off the sharks. He has every kind of plant I ever heard of, and a lot more, besides. Every time he opens his face, a nigger kid pops out of the ground with a cold drink for him to tuck into it. He has plenty of money, and nothing much to do, and nothing at all to bother him. He doesn't care a green fig for what's going on in the outside world, and half the time he doesn't even know. He just lives on sunshine and fruit and perfume. It's heaven, Mecarder, that's what it is—just heaven on earth!"

"Well?" said Mecarder.

"Well, it's the life for me, that's all!" continued Bobby. "I'm *for* it, everlastingly. I'm sick of the service, Mecarder, and I want to settle down. I'm thirty-two, and I've found what I want. These two islands are the best ever. They've got me for keeps. I've had enough of ships and routine and travel. I've found the life that suits me, and the place, and it gets into your bones, this kind of thing. It's like 'Mandalay'—'you don't 'eed nothin' else!' Do you remember how we used to sing that at Manila, with American words? Well, I've never found what I wanted or even known what it was. But, when I saw that little place across the harbor, yesterday, I knew, fast enough! One could be happy, living like that—with a nice little wife."

"Provided one could prevail on her to leave the States," put in Mecarder.

"Oh, I know what you're hinting at," said Bobby, with a sudden frown; "but that's all off, long ago. I remember drooling to you about it, that night at Singapore, and how surprised I was to find you were one of her oldest friends. But, when I got back to New York, I soon saw it was no go. Let's see; you must have been in Cape Town then. Well, there was another chap hanging around, and no need to tell how she was heading. Of course, I had no claim on her whatever; but, somehow, thinking about her all the time out there in the East, I had come to imagine I had. I tried to assert it, and—well, never mind what she said. It wasn't the kind of speech that makes a man ask how soon he can call again! I was furious, at first, but now the sting has passed off a bit. That doesn't alter the fact that it has wrecked my whole life, however. After an experience like that, Mecarder, all a chap can do is to take the next best thing."

In some respects, Constance, U.S.N., was younger than his years.

"And *this* is the next best thing!" he added, suddenly sitting up straight. "So, you may expect to hear that I've quit the navy, shortly after we get

back. Then, I'm coming down here to settle, either here or at Santa Cruz. I don't mind telling you I've a girl in mind. Nothing definite, you know. I haven't said a word; neither has she. But—oh, well, *you* know!"

There was a singular lack of enthusiasm in his voice, and, as he finished, his fine gray eyes slid over the palms in the public gardens to where, far out on the water, the *Springfield* lay at anchor. Then, his lip twitched.

"They'll be sorry to lose you, out there," said Mecarder.

"It can't be helped," said Bobby, without looking at him.

"Of course not. A man must shape his life as he sees fit. I wonder if Helen Dabney ever married the other man. I was in New York only two days last time, so I didn't pick up much news."

"I don't know. I suppose it's all fixed by this time. He was running strong when I left. She was wearing a ring of his—not on *the* finger, to be sure, but still—wearing it. He was a *Herald* man, too. They're not all such good chaps as you, Mecarder! His name was Endicott."

Mecarder narrowed his eyes, with an inscrutable little smile.

"Oh, Arthur Endicott! Then, of course, she *didn't* marry him, and never will. He's just been transferred to the Paris office at his own request, and indefinitely."

There was a long pause, broken by the uncouth jargon of some Danish officers at a neighboring table. Then, Bobby got to his feet, impatiently.

"It's thundering hot and stuffy here," he said. "Let's *do* something."

"We might take a drive," suggested Mecarder. "If you've not seen Villa Olga, it will be quite worth your while—particularly as you're thinking of settling here."

In the rickety open carriage, they swayed and rattled up the main street of Charlotte Amalia, and out on the hard, straight road beyond. To the right, the steep hillside ran up abruptly, baked and brown, and dotted with grotesque forms of cacti, aloes, tamarinds and bay-trees. To the left, through

banana patches and clumps of cocoa-palms, the blue water of the harbor dimpled and twinkled in the sun. Above them hung the dome of the tropical sky, untouched by so much as a hint of cloud. They made the long, curving sweep out toward the Haul-Over, in silence. Mecarder was endowed with that best gift of the gods—the knowledge of when not to speak.

On the way back, he halted the carriage abruptly on the outskirts of the Cha Cha village, where men and boys sat in silent indifference, plaiting fish-pots at the doorways of their cabins.

"We'll drop off here for a moment," he said. "I want to show you something. This way."

Beckoning Constance to follow, he stepped briskly to the doorway of a tiny, ramshackle hut, and pushed aside a ragged curtain of cocoa-fiber. As he did so, a lean pig ran out and disappeared, and a half-dozen disheveled fowls squawked and flapped to a place of safety.

"Johnson!" called Mecarder. "Oh, Johnson!"

A half-breed woman, who was preparing an unsavory mess over something which showed signs of having once been a stove, looked around at the summons, and drawled an answer.

"Tay-cent no use, mon. You art to know eet. He arl-ways der-unk."

She pointed to a heap of rags in one corner, whereon sprawled a man of sixty, or thereabouts, snoring stertorously. The wretched hovel reeked of greasy cooking, and was hideous with grime. The slattern in her tatters, the bits of cracked and broken pottery, the litter of slivered cane and cocoa-fiber on the floor, the rusty saucepan and tins, the sleeping man in his frayed and dirty linen—all were unspeakable! The very soul of Bobby Constance, the fastidious, sickened within him, and he was about to turn away, when Mecarder touched him.

"Come here," he said; "I just want you to see one thing."

He drew him to a position where they could see the sodden face and hear the thick breath of the sleeper

more distinctly, and, bending down, suddenly drew back the loose sleeve from the man's right forearm, and raised the latter until the light from a little window struck full upon it.

"Can you make it out?" he asked.

Yes, Bobby could make it out. Upon the white flesh the blue-purple of the tattoo stood out, as distinctly as on the day when the words were first pricked in:

G. Johnson
U. S. S. Monongahela, 1867

Mecarder let the arm fall, and touched the sleeper with his foot.

"This thing," he said, "was once an American blue-jacket. He deserted after the wreck of the *Monongahela* in '67, the very year that's there on his arm. Sometimes, he's sober, or half so, and I've had a chance to talk with him. He's rather good copy. It seems he had good-enough reasons for deserting. He was sick of the service, and he'd found the life that suited him, and he thought he could be happy with a pretty little wife he'd picked out for himself. That's the pretty little wife," he added, nodding toward the slattern bending over her malodorous stew.

Bobby looked at him sharply, his lips tightening in a thin, straight line. But Mecarder's face was untroubled and calm as that of a contented child. He was looking down at the former blue-jacket with no expression other than that of faint interest.

"I think I shall write him up, one day," he said.

"Mash!" mumbled the man, turning in his sleep.

And, under his breath, "Good God!" said Robert Constance, U.S.N.

They dined long and late in the ward-room of the *Springfield* that night, and, under Mecarder's skilful manipulation, the conversation had much to do with men and things at home. Bobby Constance, who had sat for an hour with his chin in his hands, rose suddenly at half-after nine.

"Going to turn in?" asked Carmichael.

"No," said Bobby, shortly. "Get over at the piano, Jimmy. I'll fetch the banjo. It's the deuce of a while since we did any stunts."

As he disappeared into his cabin, Carruthers searched Mecarder with his eyes.

"You've been and gone—" he began, softly.

"And done it," said Mecarder, more softly still.

There was no need of more. They all understood—except the sprats. But that was not necessary. For there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in a sprat's philosophy.

Constance rowed Mecarder back to King's Wharf. He said he needed the exercise. Both knew better.

Behind them, the Southern Cross reared shimmering against the blue-black sky. Around, the water was greened and reddened by the lights of the *Springfield*, the Danish cruiser *Valkyrien*, and the tramps of the merchant marine. Ahead, the lights of Charlotte Amalia impinged upon the darkness.

"I wish you'd tell me why you're down here," said Bobby, abruptly. "Flora—fauna—I can't stand for that kind of tommyrot, you know!"

"One day, you'll know," said Mecarder; and, one day, Bobby knew.

They parted with a hand-grip that was more eloquent than words. But there were words, too, wrung as if by a grappling-iron out of Bobby Constance's conservatism.

"Whatever may be your reason for being in St. Thomas, I'm ripping glad to have met you here—er—Jack!"

That night, before retiring to the insufficient luxury of a *Hôtel du Commerce* bedroom, Mecarder cabled three words to his intimate friend, Miss Dabney:

"Veni, vidi, vici."

Helen Dabney had graduated with honors—in Latin. Also, it was true that Mecarder occasionally took a vacation that was not in the interests of his paper, and still less in his own.

THE SONG OF SIXTEEN

I AM so young, and the sun is shining
That has shone on millions of girls before—
They had their day of joy, or of pining,
Then went afar to some unknown shore.

But I—I am young—and Life's glad Summer
Is still for me, with its days unborn;
And Earth has welcome for each newcomer,
However it mock at the hopes outworn.

Poor souls, that lived and died and are done with—
You who were gay, in this merry world—
Do you ever recall the pleasures begun with,
Before the banner of youth was furled?

Let me make the most of the joys that woo me;
Now is my season to laugh and to sing.
Not yet shall Age and its chill undo me;
Not yet shall Winter its cold blasts bring.

The birds are blithe because it is morning;
Blithely they sing as the sun climbs high.
Like them I will laugh at Time and his warning;
I am sixteen, and my sun's in the sky.

LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.



A DIFFERENCE

"SHE spends a great deal of money each season in entertaining, doesn't she?"
"No; in boring."



A DARK SECRET

FIRST POET—Do you think it pays to write poetry?
SECOND POET—I have been unable to find out.



PEOPLE never discover what a corrupt thing society is until they can't get
into it.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

A COURT of spacious splendor. Fountains fret and spray;
 And one great shaft of stone proclaims a hero's praises.
 All round about reach out afar the town's thronged mazes.
 But here is gracious room, for children at their play,
 And room for men to rest amid the cares each day
 Brings, newly burdening. The ceaseless traffic raises
 A roar of rhythméd sound, a sordid song, whose phrases
 All tone one bourdon theme of toil that lasts for aye.

A strange, stern, steadfast place, and one of proud repose;
 Marred only by the mob that writhes in labor's throes,
 The crowd that hastens ever, forced by want's harsh scourges,
 With faces reeking folly, failure and despair.
 From all who pass, scarce one of seeming mirth emerges.
 And yet—such wrought this scene, so noble and so fair.

MARVIN DANA.



BOTH ECLIPSED

K NICKER—Truth is stranger than fiction.
 BOCKER—Yes, and a historical novel is stranger than either.



GOSSIP

"ISN'T it perfectly awful?"
 "Why, it's so bad it's hardly worth while exaggerating it."



TO THE PORTRAIT OF A BRUNETTE

H AIR dark as night, and eyes that beam afar
 With the clear splendor of the evening star;
 Lips where a smile, half-hid, begins to break,
 Soft as the light on some Italian lake.

WILLIAM H. HAYNE.

THE FATTED CALF

By Juliet Wilbor Tompkins

"OH, what do you think!" Florence Worth came running up the steps, plunging in unceremoniously on Mrs. Hazeltine's account of her Robbie's recent approach to the grave, and subsequent retreat from that locality during an attack of pneumonia. Mrs. Hazeltine had reached the point where the doctors had given Robbie up; she had one plump hand pressed on Helena Bancroft's knee in preparation for the climax, when Florence ruthlessly burst in on them, her face alight with news.

"What do you think!" she repeated, dropping down on the foot of Helena's steamer-chair.

Miss Bancroft was too courteous a spirit to look relieved at the interruption; indeed, she gave Mrs. Hazeltine an apologetic smile, as she turned to the newcomer.

"Well?" she said.

"Laura has come back!"

The effect was all the speaker could have hoped. Mrs. Hazeltine even forgot Robbie for the moment.

"Oh, not really!" they exclaimed.

"And is she still with that man?" Mrs. Hazeltine asked, in deep notes.

Miss Bancroft frowned, slightly. "But you know they are married, Mrs. Hazeltine; and have been ever since he got his divorce," she protested. Then, she sighed, perplexedly. "Oh, I don't see how she can do it—after all the talk and everything!" she exclaimed.

"She wrote some one they had to come, to straighten out his affairs." Florence was plainly enjoying the situation. "He could not very well move

the mills, you see. Oh, won't there be talk!"

Helena shuddered. "I dread it! How I did grow to hate the topic, two years ago!"

"So did I," agreed Florence. "Wherever two or three were gathered together—it was always to rip Laura up the back. Well, when you run away with another woman's husband, what can you expect? Of course, she will be cut, abominably. Can't you see the Crofts and the De Wolfes and Mrs. McMurtry sailing past her? And old Mrs. Polhemus—she has just been holding on in the hope of one good crack at Laura before she dies. What will you do, Helena?"

"I don't condone what she did," said Helena, slowly; "but it seems to me she will have punishment enough—just having to spend her life with a man who was willing to desert a wife and child. They may be happy now, but sooner or later—I think I shall go to see her, and be as friendly as I can."

"Oh, good!" said Florence. "That was just what I was thinking. Why not be decent to her? I like Laura, anyway."

"I always said that Laura was not wicked at heart, only very weak," said Mrs. Hazeltine. "She had always been a nice girl before this affair—at least, so far as we knew."

"Absolutely a nice girl, Mrs. Hazeltine," Helena put in, quickly. "She was simply infatuated, and she did a crazy thing. That, in itself, is quite enough to be responsible for. I am afraid it is going to be very hard for her. Poor Laura!"

"Well, of course, the way of the transgressor—" admitted Mrs. Hazeltine. "Still, I think one should pause before casting the first stone."

"Yes; it improves the aim," murmured Florence. Mrs. Hazeltine, not quite catching her drift, nodded approval.

"So I say," she assented.

"Where is she staying, Florence?" asked Helena, hastily.

"They have taken the Beekman house. Suppose we call on her tomorrow; will you?"

Mrs. Hazeltine heaved herself out of her wicker chair. "I think that is truly kind and Christian," she decided. "I am sure Dr. Smiley would not disapprove. Give poor Laura my love, and say that I, too, am coming to see her. Don't get up, my dear Helena; I must run on and make some other calls." And she went as briskly as her outer circumstances permitted in the direction of the De Wolfes'.

"She has gone to spread the glad tidings," said Florence, sinking into the deserted chair. "I know she was giving you Robbie Lost and Robbie Regained when I came up. Had she come to, 'Mama, if I should go to heaven—'?"

"Florence, stop!" interposed Helena, laughing, in spite of herself.

"Oh, well, she irritates me, that woman," protested Florence, shrugging away the reproof.

The gray-stone house of the Bancrofts, grave, wide and generous, with deep porches and scrupulous lawns, was, in a way, the climax of the avenue; and Helena herself, gentle, yet not too approachable, delicately pretty and exquisitely clothed, might have been called the social climax of the town. She was its best product in the way of breeding combined with prosperity, and her attitude on any point was not without weight. Her attitude in the specific matter of Laura was spread diligently by Mrs. Hazeltine all that Spring afternoon—her own charity

miraculously increasing with every call, till there were actual tears in her eyes as she told Mrs. McMurtry her determination to stand by that poor, misguided girl, though the whole town cut her for it.

"She will receive punishment enough, having to spend her life with that man," she sighed, wiping her eyes. "They say he is nice to her now, but you can't tell! And then, nearly all her old friends will ignore her. You know what frightful things they said when it happened. And yet, to comfort and help the fallen——"

"You say Helena Bancroft is going to call?" interposed the practical voice of Mrs. McMurtry.

The next afternoon Helena pulled up her ponies at Laura's door, with a little sigh of nervous dread.

"I am so afraid we shall seem—kind!" she exclaimed. "It must hurt her, our coming, almost as much as our staying away would. Oh, Florence, she will hate to see us!"

"Well, she won't be any more uncomfortable than we are," said Florence, shaking out her skirts. "Do you suppose she will wear a little black gown and a turn-over white collar? They always do on the stage. Ring the bell, my dear. We're in for it, and there is no use worrying now."

They sat uncomfortably in the drawing-room while the maid went up-stairs, Helena pale with misery for Laura, and Florence betraying her discomfort by the irreverence of her whispered comments. There was a quick swish of silk in the hall, and then, as they caught hastily at self-possession and attitudes of reassuring cordiality, Laura came running in, with arms outstretched.

"Hello, girls!" she called, gaily.

Helena was conscious of a distinct shock as she returned Laura's kisses; but there was no time to analyze her feeling. Laura was chattering and laughing excitedly, holding a hand of each.

"It is so good to see you!" she reiterated. "Tell me about every—"

body. Is any one married or dead or born? Helena, you always did have the prettiest clothes in the world; I hate you for that lace collar. Florence doesn't wear lace collars like that, so she shall have a cup of tea. Isn't it funny I should be in the old Beekman house? You know how Clara Beekman and I disliked each other. I must say their taste in wall paper——"

Helena began to feel dazed. To respond with full cordiality cost her an effort, and she drew a breath of relief when Laura had called her last good-bye after the retreating ponies, an hour later. Florence kept a thoughtful silence for several blocks.

"Of course, it was bravado," said Helena, presently.

"I suppose so," said Florence. Then, she laughed. "We needn't have worked up so much tact," she said. "Laura was quite equal to the occasion."

"Yet, if you noticed, she did not make one reference to—her running away, and all that dreadful time," suggested Helena. "Perhaps, she couldn't, to us both. And yet it would have been natural——"

"Unless she didn't happen to think of it," said Florence, with reviving spirits.

A few days later, when Helena stopped at Laura's with some concert tickets which she intended to give her, she found Mrs. Hazeltine just going in with an armful of roses, and Mrs. McMurtry already there with an offering of a recipe-book. Laura's lively talk oppressed Helena, though she was ashamed of the feeling.

"I ought to be glad of her courage, not resentful of it," she upbraided herself, as she made her escape soon afterward. At the door, she met Mrs. De Wolfe, feeling for a card with nervous, black-gloved fingers.

"Oh, Miss Bancroft, you have seen her?" she whispered, with an exaggeration of caution that sent her eyebrows nearly up to her widow's bonnet. "It is so lovely of you to stand

by the poor girl! I am sure it's an example to us all. So many people will be cruel and pharisaical; we must do what we can—a few of us who can sympathize with suffering and repentance."

"Yes, indeed!" murmured Helena, and hurried away.

She met it on every side during the next few weeks: "So many people will cut poor Laura, we must do what we can to stand by her. It is not our duty to cast the first stone!" And so, there were roses and baskets of fruit at Laura's door, and carriages to take her driving, and concert and theatre tickets. And then, Mrs. Hazeltine took the leap before which all had hesitated. She announced a party.

"I really think I ought to do something as a thank-offering for Robbie's recovery," she explained, to the unlimited delight of Florence, who happened to overhear. "I hope every one will be kind, and make it as easy for her as possible. I am giving it in the afternoon, so that I needn't ask that man. If we could all gather around poor Laura when she comes in, it would reassure her, and it would influence the others."

"We might carry her in on our shoulders," Florence suggested; but, fortunately, she was not heard.

Mrs. Hazeltine's drawing-rooms were crowded on the afternoon of the thank-offering. The town was in an anguish of pity and forgiveness, burning to extend a white-gloved hand of sympathy. A few stubborn ones had held out against the tide, even declaring that they would not go to the tea if "that Laura" were asked; but Dr. Smiley's sermon on "not a sparrow" had brought them in. Even old Mrs. Polhemus was there, though there was still something martial and unsubdued in the angle of her gold eye-glasses.

"It looks as if Hamlet weren't coming," Florence whispered, pausing by Helena when the tea was at its height. "You could cut the suspense with a knife. Isn't it uncanny?"

Helena nodded, uncomfortably. Every one seemed to be waiting, with eyes on the door, and absent answers to absent questions. The tea and chocolate cooled in the dining-room; no one would leave the scene of action.

"Oh, I wish I could run away," Helena said, with drawn eyebrows. "It all offends one so, the——"

She broke off abruptly, and so did every one else as the portières were parted, and Laura appeared between them, smiling from under a white lace hat. It was the moment to gather about her, but no one moved as she swept down on Mrs. Hazeltine. There was a surface buzz of talk, but the real silence was unbroken, except for a slight snort from the direction of old Mrs. Polhemus. Laura took the agitated hand of her hostess, and smiled about her.

"You don't know how nice it seems to be here," she said, brightly. "This is my first party, you know, since I have been back. I think I shall have to give a tea myself—I never can get my calls paid up, otherwise. Oh, there are the Morton girls—I haven't seen them before—and dear old Mrs. Polhemus! I must speak to her. Why, Gracie Knowles, I didn't know you! How you have grown up!"

A strange chill began to creep over the spirit of the assembly. They had come to be nice to Laura, and suddenly it began to look as though she were being nice to them. Glances were exchanged under lifted eyebrows, and smiles grew a trifle sharp. Mrs. Knowles summoned Gracie abruptly to her side. It was one thing to stand by a suffering and broken Laura, and quite another to be greeted and encouraged by an apparently complacent Laura in a white lace hat. It might be bravado on her part. Nevertheless, the chill deepened. Groups began to drift away to the tea and chocolate. Laura put a confidential hand through Helena's arm.

"Isn't it stiff?" she murmured.

If she understood, there was not a tremor in her voice to show it.

"Teas are always stupid. Suppose we go," suggested Helena, who was in misery lest the growing irritation should find words, and felt her heart sink every time old Mrs. Polhemus turned her glasses in Laura's direction.

"Let's have something to eat first," said Laura, leading the way to the dining-room.

The talk fluttered and fell, as they entered. Helena marveled at Laura's serene face as she made her way to the group about the tea urn.

"Very weak for me, please," she said. "No sugar, thank you, Carrie. Isn't this pleasant! I am going to give a party myself next week. Will you all come?"

No one answered. Florence tried to cover the silence with a laugh.

"I will, if you'll have as good cake as this," she said. Laura was looking in unmistakable surprise from one to another averted face.

"You are cross at me!" she exclaimed. "Why, what have I done?"

There was a panic-stricken silence, broken a moment later by a deep voice.

"What has she done?" Old Mrs. Polhemus stood in the doorway behind them, her hands crossed on her gold-headed stick. "There's a woman and a child who could tell what she has done, if they were here." Then, she turned and marched out of the house. The front door banged before any one spoke. Laura had grown rather white, but her lips curved, scornfully.

"The dreadful old woman!" she murmured, looking about, in evident expectation of sympathy. No one met her eyes. "Of course, she is of another generation and can't see things as we do," Laura went on, shrugging. "In time, every one will come to our point of view, and take life more simply. Thank heaven, we are moderns."

The smothered irritation of the afternoon flamed up in a dozen indignant pairs of eyes.

"Well, count me out." It was the emphatic voice of Mrs. McMurtry that spoke. "I'm no modern, if it means making light of breaking the laws of God and man!"

"Nor I!" said several voices.

Laura looked bewildered. "I thought I might meet prejudice when I first came," she said, slowly; "but you all rushed to see me, and did things for me, so I supposed you were more enlightened than I had credited. And now—" She broke off.

"My conscience!" Mrs. McMurtry was red with anger. "We came because we thought you would be so ashamed you couldn't hold your head up without help; and we were women enough to be sorry for you. But it seems the suffering has all been on our side!"

Laura's amazed glance read confirmation in the other faces. She turned to Helena.

"Is that why you came?" she demanded, hotly. Helena flushed and paled.

"But I felt so very—friendly, Laura," she pleaded.

Laura wheeled abruptly. "Well, you needn't any more!" she said, and swept out of the room.

Florence slipped out after her, and put a hand through her arm as she hurried down the quiet street.

"The truth is, Laura," she said,

with a little laugh, "they can't forgive your lace hat—it is too becoming."

Laura bit her tremulous lips. "Wasn't it ridiculous?" she exclaimed. "Surely, you don't take that primitive attitude, Florence!"

"Laura," said Florence, slowly, "at the end of my second Winter in Paris I was modern—oh, very modern! I, too, wanted to take life simply, and scorned the Philistine. But I find, as one grows older, one rather comes back to respectability and religion and all the good old things. Yes, I've grown hopelessly nice. I'm sorry."

Laura sighed, sharply. "Ah, well, it's from living in this little mudhole. What can you expect?" she exclaimed. "I should stifle in this narrow atmosphere, now that I have known something broader. I shall make my husband sell the mills—he has been talking of it—and take me away. And, if you are wise, you will escape too, Florence. You're too interesting a personality to be wasted."

"Oh, it's too late for me. I'm in it up to my neck," said Florence, gravely. "But you are young enough to escape, Laura."

"Yes, thank goodness," said Laura; but her voice was less confident, and, for a brief moment, her eyes were bewildered and half-frightened.



IN PROOF OF THE MAXIM

"FOR shame, sir!" she said, as she pushed back a curl Much ruffled; "I had not the strength to resist!" But please do not think I'm that kind of a girl—
Though I had the misfortune just now to be kissed!"

I was sorry, of course, I had caused her such pain
By a quick-dabbed caress, and, contrition to show,
I vehemently vowed, as I kissed her again:

"Misfortunes, dear, never come singly, you know!"

ROY FARRELL GREENE.

WHEN SHE GOLFS

A DOWN the club-house steps she trips,
 To play her game, arrayed
 In all the fettle that equips
 A golfer, and a maid;
 With plaided bag, and clubs half-score,
 With garb and eyes of blue,
 With patent balls a goodly store,
 And smiles and dimples, too.

And now upon the teeing plot—
 "Must I go first?" she pouts.
 "No; *you!* You've played, you know, a lot!"—
 And flutters, pleads and doubts.
 But see, awaits her tee; the ball
 Is balanced on the sand;
 Her bag she recklessly lets fall,
 And bravely takes her stand.

She waggles—but some hampering fold
 Demands adjustment, slight;
 She waggles—but her ball has rolled
 From off its little height;
 She waggles—and a lock of hair
 She deftly tucks—like this;
 She waggles—and says: "I declare,
 I'm sure that I shall miss!"

At last she swings ('midst other things—
 A list my space scarce brooks),
 The while a "Fore!" she sweetly sings—
 And wonders how she looks!
 And, though the ball **may** not skim far,
 E'en never move a bit,
 Who'll dare deny the chances are
 That she has made a hit?

EDWIN L. SABIN.



GOSSIP OF THE TURF

VERY often it is the mare that makes the money go.



"HE died of cramps."
 "Huh! I warned him not to live in a flat."

FAYAL, THE UNFORGIVING

By Miriam Michelson

"**T**HINK again, princess; this man who asks your hand is no petty king."

Wilburtha lifted eyes somber as black fire. "I do not like his face. Perhaps, the picture lies. But he does not please me."

The councilor inured to femininity said many things within himself. Aloud, he but began over again.

"Fayal is emperor over a domain so vast and mighty that your august uncle's realm is but a patch on a wheat-field compared to it."

Wilburtha played with the pure gold-pieces that hung enchained between her breasts, admiring, bit by bit, the rare workmanship on each, and indifferently letting it fall again.

"Our lord, your uncle, child, may marry again; and, if he does, a reigning princess, young and beautiful, will be your rival here where you have reigned supreme."

She raised a tiny hand-glass whose carved ivory back bore Fayal's face, and idly, insolently, contentedly gazed therein.

"A son and successor may even be born to him. You do not know, Wilburtha, what influence a young mother may have upon an old husband, hitherto childless. Your retinue, princess, is a costly burden to the prince. Think, extravagant and capricious as you are, of having to account to another—a woman perhaps younger than yourself—for every extravagant caprice."

Wilburtha stretched herself upon the cushions. Beneath the jeweled gauze that draped her perfect body, she lay superbly indifferent.

"And the world grows old, Wilburtha, and weary and fickle. Remember, princess, the opportunity to wed fittingly may not come soon again."

A smile of dazzling insolence parted her crimson lips, and her bosom fell with the weight of a noiseless laugh, as light as the fall of a magnolia leaf from the bud.

"This Fayal, now—to be frank, my lord the prince insists, Wilburtha——"

"Enough! enough!" So swift was the motion that undid her pose that for a second she seemed to be a flying whirlwind of glittering gems, of satins, and of ivory flesh. The jeweled mirror, whose ivory was carved in Fayal's likeness, fell to the floor, breaking with a crash, and the privy councilor jumped nervously from his seat.

Wilburtha looked from the shattered fragments on the floor to the councilor's face.

"I shall not—shall not—shall not! I shall not wed until I choose—perhaps, not at all. And never Fayal—never him—never—tell my lord. First, because I shall not, and second, because you wish it."

She turned her face from him, and her slender limbs melted again into the cushioned down till she looked like a jeweled mosaic done in glittering curves against a soft background rich in color, that rose to meet and engulf her loveliness.

The privy councilor stood looking down at her. Upon his face, from which her eyes were averted, was writ all that he might not say. Once, a slave girl whom she had beaten had

sought to poison Wilburtha; before the girl had left her presence she had looked upon her mistress with such an expression as the councilor's face now wore.

The rustle of a silken gown broke in upon his reverie. He glanced up, his guilty features quickly assuming their inexpressive immobility. He saw the archbishop, and read displeasure and dismissal in his face.

"You are right, my child," the ecclesiastic murmured, as he stooped to pick up the shattered mirror while the curtain fell behind the departing councilor.

Wilburtha turned and faced him. "I know I am," she said; "or, rather, I knew I was before your grace agreed with me."

He was piecing together the shattered bits he held, with his long, delicate, insinuating fingers.

"You must let me take this mirror to a skilful workman in ivories," he said, softly, preoccupied, as though he had not heard her words. "The pattern is so rare, the cutting is so deep and intricate, it were a pity if—"

"I am fond of it though it does bear Fayal's face," she said, regretfully. "Do you know its history, your grace?"

He shook his head.

"It comes, of course, from Fayal's palace, the one bit of royal carving that ever got beyond the frontier. A lover who wearied me with his protestations demanded at last a test to prove his passion. I suggested a Fayal ivory and he brought—or, rather, sent, me this."

The archbishop lifted his eyes from the piecing in which he was absorbed. They were wonderful eyes. One saw them rarely. Their expression filled the pause that followed like both a question and a response. Yet, Wilburtha completed her account.

"Yes, he was burned alive the other side of the dividing line, and his ashes were scattered to the winds just over the frontier."

There was another pause. The archbishop's finely modeled hand—

like a piece of sentient ivory itself—was busy with the precious fragments he was arranging in his palm. The girl stirred, restlessly. Without an upward glance the archbishop spoke.

"I understand, my child; I understand."

"You understand—pray, what?"

"Your love—your hate, Wilburtha."

She smiled, contemptuously disdaining enlightenment; and yet, his words rankled.

"Then is your comprehension far greater than my own, your grace," burst from her, at length; "for Wilburtha honors no man by hating or by loving him—neither for burning nor for being burned."

"Tut, tut, my child! An old priest is naught but ears that forget and eyes that may not see. You may be frank with me. How terrible he is—Fayal, the Unforgiving."

"Fayal, the Unforgiving!" She repeated the name, musingly. "Is that what men call him?"

"Not in his own dominions, but elsewhere, where his terrible power may not reach. Yet, even there, having offended, they tremble and start at every step, fearing some subtle, far-off manifestation of his dread self."

She turned upon her pillows, nestling her cheek upon the palm of a hand that completed the purpose of her shapely arm as a calla completes the lily's stalk.

"Of him it has been told that he never forgives; that man may not live long enough to outlive his wrath; that, young as he is, no resting place is in his soul for peace or happiness or pleasure till an offense against him is expiated."

"Yes?" said Wilburtha.

The archbishop dropped a bit of ivory, and picked it up again.

"The awful might of his name has beaten armies ere they went forth to battle against him. He knows no mercy for a sin against himself. And that man sins who pits himself against the emperor in deed or word or thought."

"Yes?"

"Yet, if it were not for the terrible majesty of his cruel name, men might tell other tales of Fayal—of his magnificence, of his greatness, of his surpassing personal strength, of the miracle of his military glory, of the keenness of intellect which makes playthings of the wit and wisdom of those old ministers who would guide the young emperor, yet who live only to fulfil his will."

"Yes?"

"The churchman has only sternest reprobation for his relentless, unforgiving spirit——"

"Yes, yes?"

"—but the man in the churchman must recognize, with something like admiration, the marvelous qualities in this young Cæsar, who, but for the blot upon his fair fame——"

"Oh—yes?"

"As I said, princess, your instinct was right. You do well to refuse this man, for——"

"Yes, yes! But what were you about to say of him?"

"Nothing further, child, save to congratulate you on your escape."

"Say more, your grace! ah, say more! You have seen him—yes?"

The archbishop's cool old hand trembled under her touch, and the sweetness of her voice—that voice which he had never before heard pleading—sought and found him.

"I saw him at his coronation. He has a face and figure that fit his fame. When first my eyes beheld his strippling strength and suppleness, his kingly bearing, though a lad, the untamed majesty of his glance, and when I heard of how he had taken his place, and set his foot upon the necks of those who had thought to shape and mold his temper——"

"Yes! yes!"

"—that time I said to myself, all ignorant, princess, of the malignant cruelty, the ruthless wickedness that makes his name and mars his fame——"

"Yes?"

"—I said—your pardon, princess——"

"Yes, yes!"

"I said, 'God has created Wilburtha's fate!' I never saw a spirit bold and strong as yours before—nor since. Alas!"

She turned again. Her hand fell lightly, and her bediademed head sank backward. She stretched herself upon her cushions as though every nerve were bathed in balm.

"I sigh, Wilburtha, that this unforgiving prince will turn his enmity upon the one who has rejected his love. I sigh that his great genius, all misdirected, is sure mightily to be put forth against our lord, this unhappy realm and—and you, my child. I sigh— Alas! alas!"

"You need not, your grace." Her slow lids fell, as she lay outstretched, and her voice was dreamily sweet. "I shall marry this Fayal—Fayal, the Unforgiving."

With a deft movement of his little finger, the archbishop pushed the last bit of broken ivory in its place. Perfect satisfaction was written upon his countenance.

II

THE jeweled stole of gold that Wilburtha wore, broad, fine-linked and softly wrought as satin, extended in lace-like fringes to the very border of her petticoat of gauze-of-gold. Behind her trailed the long, white mantle of the bride. Of all the gleaming grace of glory she appeared, no trace of color could one see save white and gold—unless it were the pomegranate beauty of her lips, the blue-black masses of her hair.

She walked with downcast eyes, and all the court that had been filled with rumors of her pride, gazed upon her beauty, unrebuked.

She walked alone through the silken silence of the strange court, for none that owned not Fayal's sway might witness his taking of a bride, his making of an empress.

Yet, her sandaled feet never faltered. Her bosom's rise and fall was rhythmic as a southern sea. She

seemed a bride of gold and marble, save for the majesty and grace with which she moved.

"A riddle—this!" The emperor's prime minister, old Agatroyd, spoke under his breath. His wrinkled lids scarce lifted from his aged eyes; he looked and pondered, uneasily. "What manner of woman is this?" he asked his great-granddaughter. "Does she feign serenity, you think?"

The young girl looked, and hated.

"Insolent!" she whispered. "Would you know what her whole bearing says? Listen: 'You, none of you, are worthy of a glance. I scorn to be curious even about this court which shall be mine. The magnificence of Fayal's palace, the beauty of the women—the valor and renown of the men—all, all are nothing in my eyes, for I disdain to look.' This is what she says. Insolent! Fayal will tame her, and then——"

"Hush! hush! Your eyes are young but they are clouded with envy. See, she meets the emperor. Now, she looks. What's in her eyes? What's in her eyes? Fayal alone can tell."

Wilburtha raised her orbs, and beheld that which their vision had been kept virgin for.

Above her, on the throne steps, where the strip of cloth-of-gold had its source, the great emperor stood. Slowly, her gaze climbed upward from his body, tense, immovable and shining in a golden suit of mail, every link of which was diamond-set, to the rigid features underneath the crown, and the inscrutable eyes which met her own, impassive now as they must have been all the time she had been walking forward along the strip of cloth-of-gold that flowed like a path of glory leading her to him.

They looked into each other's eyes. He saw the fear of him that dwelt unacknowledged in her soul in that one glance; and then, her lids fell.

Not once again during the ceremonies, not even when Fayal's hot hand locked the wedding circlet about her throbbing throat, and cast the tiny golden key into the crucible's fiery

flame which melted it away, nor when, at last, he placed the crown upon her massed curls of ebony, did her soul look out again. And, when the emperor dismissed his court and withdrew with his bride, none but himself had seen her eyes.

They stood alone together; she, immovable before him; he, his gaze bent fixedly upon her.

"Wilburtha!"

Startled, she raised her head. That voice had not the accent she awaited. Something in it recalled to her the pictured face in ivory upon her mirror's back.

He laid a hand upon her shoulder, and, lifting her face to his, he said: "Look up—look long at me, Wilburtha."

A passion of inquiry shone in the great, black eyes she lifted to his face. He bent and kissed them closed again. She shrank away, and he let her go.

"What name do you know me by, Wilburtha?"

"Fayal, the Unforgiving!" She cried it out, defiantly.

"You have heard of the fate of the city of Tekalis?"

"It was immolated—the whole city buried alive, and not one of its thousands escaped. A mountain rears its head where once it flourished."

"Because it offended Fayal."

"Because it offended Fayal."

"You know of the country of the Whittites?"

"It was a garden of earth. The sea has been let in upon it. Sometimes, at low tide, one may guess what it once was. But, when the ocean re-surges, the tallest trees that grew there are not as high as the sedge grass that blows above it."

"Because——"

"Because it offended Fayal."

"You know, too, of Moriway's execution, of the destruction of Quaribrar, of——?"

"All—all—I know all."

She had listened while the archbishop had told the dread tale, but, in the very presence of the man who had done such things, she felt emotional,

unnerved. She could not bear a repetition—and the threat she fancied behind it.

"You know all?"

"Yes, all."

"And so do I—now."

"You! now! now!"

"Now," he said. "I heard it from a woman who had been tortured so near to death that in a frenzy of hunger for it, she escaped from the torturers, and thrust herself in my presence, and spat the tale in my very teeth, hoping that I might have her killed for it."

"I do not understand," she said, bewildered. "Till then—?"

"Till then, I did not know of it; nor had I ever heard the adjective the world has added to my name—the designation which will be mine through the centuries."

Upon her face, the emperor read amazement, incredulity. He took her hand, and held it close within his own.

"Wilburtha—that men for centuries to come shall curse my name, shall tell with bated breath the infamy of deeds accredited to me—this must I bear, this can I bear, if one, just one upon this living earth, and that one you, Wilburtha, my wife, shall know the truth—and me."

She looked at him as in a dream.

"Ever since the ambassadors came back with your consent, I have seen you, Wilburtha, walking as you did to-day up the long hall to me. And ever since that day I have imagined in your eyes the look I dreaded to see there—the look they had when first they rested on me—that awful look of fear!"

Her hand fell from his.

"I swore, when first Agatroyd broached marriage to me, I would not wed to have a child carry upon his heart the load of being son to Fayal, the Unforgiving. I swore I would not see upon my wife's face that look with which the whole world faces me. But when he told me of you, Wilburtha, of your haughty pride, your will, your power over men, I thought—I dreamed

your eyes might meet mine and have no fear—even though you knew."

She stood before him, dumb.

"You see, I erred. But let me tell you how it was. My ministers are men who shaped my future before my birth. They are old, old—so coldly, cruelly old as not to seem any longer of this world. Like survived monsters of another age, they seem to look upon this world from out cold, rheumy eyes, whose drooping, wrinkled lids veil nothing left that is human. So old, so old they are that nothing lives of them but will. Their limbs wither. Their children's children die. They have no meeting-place with life. They have no vices. They have no virtues. The world, my people, and myself are figures in a problem they work out with such dispassionate inhumanity as never chills or heats their calm, dead blood. They were old when my father was born. And yet, they live and rule through me. The mistakes their human fallibility made in my father's reign they correct in mine, rubbing out a people from their map, drawing a death stroke through a man's life as carefully, as scientifically as though the result of their calculations were to be measured in chalk marks instead of beating, human hearts. They kill, they torture, they punish—relentless, unangered, unfeeling. They make my name synonymous with terror, having decided that a figurehead is more potential when it is a thing of horror; and also being coldly, scientifically interested in working out the problem, this time along different lines. My father was The Tender. I am The Unforgiving. As an experiment, they set his image in the hearts of the people, working through the tender mirage they themselves created. They bear me like a bloody axe throughout the world, and kill and slay and crucify in my name—the name they gave me. My father was no saint, and I—I, Wilburtha—"

He stretched out appealing hands to her, as she stood staring dumbly at him.

"I—that Fayal whom men fear and

women execrate—the real I is fashioned of such material that it irks me to bid a slave do this or that, for the very reason that I have the power so to do. It shames me even to probe sharply into a dereliction, for the pitiful consciousness I have of the character and circumstances of him who has failed. Men are what they are. What are men to judge them? I would rather bleed at every pore than put my most savage enemy to death. I could give my body to the torturers, and pray that it might endure everlastingly, if the sharp, iron teeth might be glutted and clogged with my flesh—and so keep others' whole. I know of no crime, however terrible, inhuman, that merits revenge. I know no greatness that will compensate for one woman's agony over her slain husband. I know no glory whose shine is not dulled and blackened forever if a child's heart has been made to beat thickly for one terror-stricken instant—to attain it. There is nothing fine enough in life to outweigh, to wash out the reproachful misery in a dying horse's eye. I could not kill with my own hand; I could not will that one be killed, even though he had done the foulest wrong—to you, Wilburtha."

His voice melted into a sob as he fell upon his knees, his arms clasped about her, his face uplifted in passionate entreaty.

Her body drew away from him rather by an involuntary physical contraction than a conscious, definite motion. A slow wave of repulsion seemed to shiver over her from sandaled feet to crowned head.

He rose, and walked toward the door.

"In time, perhaps," he said, slowly, "you may believe, and you may forget the things done in my name for those that I would do—that I might do if you and I— Ah, if that time comes, when everything that is sentient in your body and your soul cries out for me as all that is in me cries out for you—come to me, Wilburtha!"

The curtain fell behind him.

She stood rigid, looking after him. But upon her face there grew a scorn that might have withered anything that passed before it; and then, her composure broke.

"A puppet—a thing of straw—a suckling coward—and my husband!"

Her wrathful wail ended in a sob, and she fell prone, her tear-stained face to earth, the splendor of her raiment emphasizing her abasement.

"The emperor has sent me to your majesty." It was the voice of Agatroyd's great-granddaughter that broke upon her passionate sobs.

Wilburtha raised her head. The malice in the woman's voice fell heavy on her haughty heart and cooled it. She looked from this envious pleasure in her humiliation to the wonder in the face of the old man who followed, and who bent to help her to her feet.

"A dread, dread lord is Fayal," whispered the lady-in-waiting, audibly. "Help her, grandfather, to earn Fayal's forgiveness for her maiden reluctance to come to him. It is doubtless this which he so terribly resents."

The old man did not speak, but his gaze dwelt scrutinizingly on Wilburtha, as though to surprise, to anticipate her very thoughts.

"But, alas! it is not in his nature to show mercy," chanted his granddaughter's mocking whisper. "Already, through the court, they tell of how his haughty empress, the beautiful, wilful Wilburtha, lies alone in tears upon her bridal day."

Wilburtha wrenched her hand from Agatroyd's.

"And already this latest proof of his cruelty spreads panic among his enemies." The prime minister, with the grave, slow significance of his utterance, stopped the words that trembled on Wilburtha's lips.

A storm of passion blew across her face. He watched it and its subsidence before he spoke again.

"Yet, as I read her nature, Wilburtha would be empress of such an emperor rather than be known as wife to a weakling, puling prince, upon whose neck she might set her haughty

foot, and parade his uxorious serfdom before a sneering world."

A flash of comprehension swept over her face. She looked deep into his old, cold eyes. And he looked back again.

"The empress is wife to—" he began, putting out a withered hand.

"I am wife to Fayal, the Unforgiving," she cried, grasping it with her warm, young strength.

The lady-in-waiting looked upon them both with awe, the mocking

smile frozen upon her lips. Old Agatroyd's wrinkles were a shade less deeply cut, and Wilburtha stood again erect, her haughty self.

"Men marry women for what they are, hoping they'll be what they are not," sang Xanthoridon, who chants the glories of Fayal's reign.

Women wed men for what they're not, dreaming they'll be not what they are.



PRESCIENCE

WAS there any sign that came to her
Ere the dream was a certain thing?
Nay—she but thought she heard the stir
Of the closed buds blossoming.

Was there any sign that she knew at all
Ere the false little dream took wing?
Nay—she but thought she felt the fall
Of a snowflake in the Spring.

JOHN WINWOOD.



HE GOT EVEN

WIFE—Oh, John, you've waked the baby!
HUSBAND—Serves him right. He kept me awake all last night.



BRIGGS—Yes, bridge is very much like the game of life—so much depends upon your partner.
GRIGGS—Yes, and that is why so many go broke at it.



HE—If I should throw my arms around your neck, kiss you and implore you to be my wife, would you scream?
SHE—Yes—for a stenographer.

THE VOICE O' LOVE

IT was Love who called me, a morning in the meadow,
 "Come out, sweetheart! come out, sweetheart, the Spring is in the land!
 All the world is wonderful with dappled sun and shadow,
 Here I wait with happiness held close in either hand."

*Oh, I brake my spinning off,
 Eager to be free.
 Duty frowned beside the wheel,
 "Do thy work!" quoth she.*

It was Love who called me, at noontide in the greenwood,
 "Come out, sweetheart! come out, sweetheart, and in the silence rest.
 Take thy ease beneath the leaves, as softly as a queen should,
 Both my arms about thee, and thy head upon my breast."

*Oh, I raised my weary hand,
 Longing, wistfully.
 Duty set the wheel astir,
 "Do thy work!" quoth she.*

Through the gloom of twilight, the nesting birds were calling—
 Oh, sick at heart, I turned the wheel, whom none might summon more,
 When, like touch of rain in May, came sound of swift feet falling,
 And Love stood beside me there where Duty was before.

*"Since thou cam'st not at my call,
 Sweet, I come to thee.
 I am here to turn thy wheel,
 And aid thy task," quoth he.*

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



MRS. A.—I have traveled all over Europe, in the hope that my daughter
 would meet some foreign nobleman.

MRS. B.—Why didn't you travel all over America?



"I HAD no idea that Mrs. Pacer was so romantic."

"What did she do?"

"Why, she ran away from home and got divorced."



CHAPPIE—I don't think I shall marry Marjorie.
 FRIEND—Wise girl!

BLUE BLOOD

By G. B. Burgin

THE octogenarian Lady Fontenoy always breakfasted in bed; she also received visitors there on the plea that it was an old-time Italian custom which had its economical advantages, and saved wear and tear of her one black-silk dress. Besides, she felt more at home in bed, and could always feign sleep when visitors bored her. The vicar had a deep-seated conviction that she never woke up. If she wanted to get rid of local magnates, she ostentatiously made a point of going to sleep, although the results were not picturesque. As a matter of fact, there was no necessity for her to economize by stopping in bed; but she was convinced that it was her duty to save money for her son, Sir Harry, who always left business details to her. He was the only living male representative of the oldest family in England, and his mother held that it would be a disgraceful thing to allow him to work for a living; such blue blood must be worshiped from a distance. She lowered her own vitality in her attempts to raise money, and never let him know how near she was to penury. Sir Harry, however, always refused to take money from his mother, and led her to infer that he won a precarious income at bridge. In this sole instance, even her iron will had to bend to his. So, she stayed in bed, and spent most of her time in sorrowing over the faded glories of her house.

Once, Sir Harry broached the subject of work, but she nearly had a fit. "When heaven summons me hence," she said, with the air of one who would rather tolerate than en-

courage so uncalled for an impertinence, "you may do what you will. I shall be busy elsewhere—doubtless engaged as befits my rank—but, until then, you will remember the motto of our house—'*Noblesse oblige*.' Don't argue with me, for I won't listen to you. You might as well try to argue with the jackaws on the ramparts."

"Oh, I'm not going to argue, mother," said Sir Harry, with a sigh. "Life and your temper are too short to admit of argument. You always begin your argument with a repartee, and I can't live up to you."

To do him justice, Sir Harry did not want his mother's money. "Get up out of bed, mother, and I'll trot you over to Monte Carlo or Ostend for a little flutter," he urged, when they finally discussed the subject.

But Lady Fontenoy declined to flutter; she said that she had molted all the feathers out of her wings, and that the attempt to flutter would result in her landing on *terra firma* with a broken collar-bone or a torn silk dress. "And you know," she added, "we must save money to repair the castle, not waste it on repairing ourselves. Besides, you are perfectly aware that it would be ridiculous of me to trot. Think of the castle, and economize."

"The castle, mother! Oh, bother the castle! Why, there are only four sound rooms in it. I believe the place was built on a quicksand. What with repairing these moldy old walls, and getting that gorgeous green-and-gold livery for Judkins every year, there's nothing left over from the—the estate."

"My dear"—the old lady sat up in

bed, as he brought her chocolate—"my dear, we nearly conquered England once for ourselves. An ancestress of ours—I don't mind admitting in confidence—there was no scandal, mind you—that Norman William—eh—thought a great deal of her."

"Well, there's no doubt that England has conquered us, eh, mother?"

"*Noblesse oblige*," repeated the old lady, firmly. "What do we see around us?"

"Dashed spiders!"

"You must remember that the spider is an aristocratic insect which dwells in kings' palaces."

"Well, mildew and cobwebs aren't anything to brag about. I never heard of people being proud of spiders before."

"Pshaw! You are a degenerate, my son. You know whose blood is in your veins?"

"Ye-es, mother. You—you're not going to tell me there—there has been a mistake somewhere, and that it's—it's evaporated. Don't say that I have been changed at nurse."

The old lady reassured him with a smile. "Whatever the inner history of that affair with Norman William, the papers of the period did not get hold of it, and, so far as I am concerned, I have always remembered *Noblesse oblige*. I may be a ruin within a ruin; but I am not a jerry-built ruin, Harry. We were great people once."

"We were that," said Harry, with relish; "and we had a great time, too—some of us; the rest of us are paying the bills. If we hadn't been quite so great, I should have more money to spend."

"Your ancestors," the old lady became animated, "ruffled it with the best. Kings have borrowed from them."

"Borrowed what?"

"Money, of course," said the old lady, hastily. "*Nob*—"

"Ah, now, mother, remember that ancestress! Weren't they rather a fishy lot?"

"Who? The kings?"

"No; our ancestors."

"Fishy! They were not fishermen. Their—their eccentricities never exhibited that particular form of mendacious insanity."

"Nor mine, either; but I took the miller's little girl fishing the other day, and, by way of an opening, remarked that Dr. Johnson had once said that, when people went fishing, there was a worm at one end of the line and a fool at the other. 'Well,' said the miller's little daughter, 'you're not the worm.' Neat, wasn't it? I'd like to know that girl when she grows up, if I weren't already—" He stopped, in confusion.

The old lady regarded him, severely. "Though we have fallen on degenerate times, there is no reason that our habits should match them," she said, crisply. "In the old days, we did not go fishing either for, or with, millers' daughters. They—eh—went with the estate. Harry, remember, that once a grand seigneur, always a grand seigneur. If you are poor, your blood isn't."

"My dear mother!"—the good-looking lad—he was fair and six-feet-two in his stockings, a son of Anak—looked tenderly at her—"my dear mother, you never allow me to forget it. I'm an anachronism nowadays—a thing that ought to be stuffed with sawdust, and put in a museum, like Mark Twain's blue jay."

"No, Harry, no; you are no jay. Your blood is as blue as—"

"Skim-milk. I'm blue myself, sometimes. Dashed blue! Our blessed ancestors were a bad lot. They gambled and drank and ran away with other people's wives, and mortgaged everything up to the hilt, until we have come down to this. We must accommodate ourselves to circumstances. We sha'n't get any other accommodation."

"My dear"—the old lady sat up in bed, and adjusted her gaudy cap with the air of a judge sentencing a man to instant execution—"my dear, it is our duty to stand aloof from the mushroom throng."

"Look here, mother, mushrooms are

dashed good things in their way. You try them in a pie, with a touch of——”

“Oh, in their way—yes; but their way is not our way. We are the oaks under whose shelter they presume to grow. Do you think, Harry, that the Creator would not be grieved if He thought that we were unmindful of our position as the premier family in England? Do you think, when He has given us so unspeakable a privilege, that it would be right for you to make a *mésalliance* and throw it away? Our blood is all that is left to us. If you do not marry blood, the race must die with you.”

“Do you mean to say I’m not to marry?”

The old lady considered. “You might, perhaps, marry money; but if you cannot marry money *and* blood, the line must die out. It is a duty you owe to your house. For you to marry a modern girl, would be like drinking champagne with Apollinaris; it may be healthful, but the crowd do it; and we must lead, not follow, the crowd.”

“Oh, if you’re going to crowd me out, mother——!”

“It simply does not admit of argument. *Noblesse oblige*. You have my permission to leave me, Harry.”

The young fellow kissed her. “Arbitrary old tyrant!” he said, fondly. “I’ll go into a Trappist monastery if you’re not careful.”

“Don’t disgrace me by doing anything of the sort. People mainly go into a Trappist monastery because they can’t hold their tongues; that’s why I’m so surprised there are never any women there,” said the old lady, fiercely; and Harry went out. Sometimes, he could not help wishing that his mother had had a monastic training, for her tongue was never idle.

Left alone, the old lady rang for Judkins, who came, green-and-gold livery and all. One part of the castle—the inhabited portion—was divided off, so as to be inaccessible to tourists. Sir Harry was supposed to be unaware of the old lady’s object in decking out Judkins with gorgeous livery. The

latter took visitors around the ramparts at two-and-six a head, and thus, in the course of the year, accumulated a handsome sum which he handed over to his mistress with scrupulous fidelity. Fortunately for the revenues of Fontenoy, there was a certain choice dungeon left in the castle, with a complete, though somewhat primitive, iron apparatus, once used by Norman nobles for extracting teeth from Jews to whom they owed money; this, in by-gone times, seemed to have been the primitive Norman fashion of giving a receipt. Curiously enough, the fame of so barbarous a relic of the past had spread all over the world, and children of Israel came from many countries to see a machine which invariably proved to possess so strong a fascination for them that they offered large sums for it. The ingenuous, and ingenious, Judkins—he was a bit of a mechanic in his spare time—taking advantage of the craze, had a stock of duplicates artistically manufactured by himself, and did a thriving trade in this instrument of torture, each purchaser fondly believing that he alone possessed the original. Lady Fontenoy, an innocent participator in the fraud, made at least a couple of hundred a year in this nefarious manner, and hoarded it. Judkins lived only to minister to her will and pleasure. There had been a John Oldkins in the time of Norman William, a vassal on the estate. His descendant was still a villain, but Time had gradually contracted the “John Oldkins” into “Judkins.” Centuries of obedience had also made him a mere puppet. The autocratic old lady bent him like a reed. If she had told him to cut his throat, he would have done it. Now, she commanded him to bleed tourists instead of bleeding himself, and he did that equally as a matter of course, eying his rusty old tooth-extractor with a sigh of regret that the milk-and-watery laws of the realm prevented him from once more turning this barbaric remnant of medievalism to its past profitable uses. He had an idea that tax-collectors and water-rate men

might be made as profitable as the usurers of old.

Judkins appeared in answer to the bell, with the methodical accuracy of a machine. "How much to-day, Judkins?" his mistress suspiciously inquired.

"Two pun' seven, your ladyship." Judkins handed her his leather bag.

She counted the money carefully, and was about to put it away in a strong box which Judkins dragged from under the bed, when she suddenly espied a doubtful coin, bit it to make sure, and threw it to him. "A bad sixpence! If this happens again, I shall stop it out of your wages," she said, severely.

Although Judkins never received any wages, he heard the threat with well-feigned terror. "It sha'n't never happen again, your ladyship," he said, humbly; "but some of them tourists 'ud take in Old Harry himself, they're that artful."

Lady Fontenoy's cap slipped over one eye. She jerked it fiercely back again.

"Judkins, you know the duty you owe to my house?"

"Yes, m'lady."

"I don't mind telling you, Judkins, that I am uneasy about your master. He doesn't know how badly off he is, and yet I can never find out how he spends his time. He's never here, except in the Summer. How does he contrive to dress so well? Do you know if he dares to do anything for a living?"

"No, m'lady."

"And he doesn't know that you take money for showing the place?"

"No, m'lady."

"The things he doesn't know, amaze me. Some day he will find out, Judkins. Then, he will thrash you for disgracing us. I dare not face him."

"Yes, m'lady."

"Will you take the thrashing, Judkins? Your master has a right to hang you with his own hands should he choose to amuse himself in that way. The right is only in abeyance. It still exists, you know."

"Yes, m'lady."

"There will be trouble soon, Judkins, if things don't mend."

"Yes, m'lady."

"He must marry."

"In course, m'lady."

"But it must be blue blood as well as yellow gold."

"In course, m'lady."

"Do you know of any one suitable?"

"There's only one fam'ly, m'lady, as old as ours."

"The De Montalons?"

"Yes, m'lady."

"But Miss De Montalon has no money."

"No, m'lady."

"Judkins, you're an idiot."

"Yes, m'lady."

"Can't you find a girl with blue blood and money enough?"

"Can't be done, m'lady."

"Ah!" she replied, "we've so little to offer in exchange—now."

"Only a moldy old castle, m'lady. Young ladies nowadays don't care to look at blue blood unless it's got motor cars, and di'monds, and yachts and things to set it off. Even the jackdaws won't stop in the castle now the walls is so shaky. I've had to ketch half-a-dozen, and tie 'em to the battlements with string, just to make the place look more cheerful; and they don't like it."

"Who don't? The birds or the tourists?"

"The birds, m'lady. There's one old jackdaw swears awful. He's got a nest in the tower hard by the 'Fox and 'Ounds,' and he's picked up langwige there as 'ud make your ladyship's hair curl."

"Well, what then? It will save my doing it myself."

"Nat'rally, m'lady, when the jackdaw sees tourists strolling round, he uses his gift, and makes the most of it. I've nearly broke my neck taking up his food to him on the top of the wall. Tourists tell one another about him, and I daren't let him go, or the receipts would fall off. They come miles to hear him swear, m'lady, and look upon it as a treat."

"What does he say, Judkins?" The old lady sat up with keen interest.

"If he was a 'uming being, m'lady, his fines for bad langwige 'ud eat up all the profits. There's no denyin' he has a gift that way; and, when the old hen brings the young ones over to look at him, and he can't join 'em to go thieving round the village, he just makes the air blue all over the battlements. I had to shorten his string a bit to stop his fighting, and he nearly bit my thumb off."

"I must get up early and have a talk to him myself," said the old lady, with relish. "It's a long time since I've heard what I call really strong language—language that says what it means, and means what it says."

"Yes, m'lady; not since the late earl's time," suggested Judkins. "One could always know what he meant, m'lady."

Lady Fontenoy frowned. "But about Miss De Montalon, Judkins? What's the girl like?"

"Very dark, m'lady—han'some as a picter. She's been away nearly all the time for the last seven years. No money there, m'lady, but blood as good as ours."

"Well, Judkins"—the old lady turned uneasily in her bed—"we must find some one. If I were to die to-morrow, there wouldn't be more than enough to keep your master going for a year."

"Can't you let him work, m'lady? He wants to."

"Work!" The old lady sat bolt upright, with a scream of horror. "A Fontenoy work! Judkins, have you been drinking?"

Judkins furtively moistened dry lips. He liked a glass of good ale, but, in his devotion to the family, often denied himself that pleasure. "No such luck, m'lady. It just makes my tongue go dry to listen to that jackdaw when his fam'ly jeer, and he can't get at 'em. He likes his bread sopped in beer. He'll overlook anything when I give him that."

The old lady reluctantly produced a

shilling. "I shall deduct this from your wages, Judkins," she said, magnificently. "In the meantime, slake your thirst, and the—the jackdaw's, too. He mustn't get too thirsty to swear, or people won't come to listen to him."

Judkins hesitated, and shut his lips tight. "If you'd excuse me, m'lady, I ain't so thirsty as I was, and Jacky don't mind his beer being stale. I didn't mean to—grumble, m'lady."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" The old lady was touched. "Do as I order you, Judkins. The bird must have a little stimulant, just to encourage him, and you must have a little to encourage the bird. Take the shilling, immediately."

Judkins took the shilling. "I can give it back to her to-morrow," he murmured to himself. "Now, Sir Harry'll come to me, and cuss because she won't allow him to work. And she won't let him marry money if there ain't blood be'ind it; and folk with money ain't got no blood, and folk with blood ain't got no money; and I'm as hard up as that old jackdaw, 'cept he don't mind his beer stale, and I does. Sir Harry's got a string round his leg, too; but he can't cut it till the old lady dies. The old earl would ha' pulled up if she'd ha' let him. Not she! She ain't the pulling-up sort. When he wanted to save, 'Remember your blue blood,' says she. 'Poor Harry,' says he. 'Nobody's obliged,' says she, in her erty, forrin way; and he never had no answer to that, though I can't see why. Now, I must take my liv'ry off, and dig worms for that bloomin' jackdaw. Nice way he'll thank me, too, when he gets 'em. Just sits and looks at me, and sneers at my shirt-sleeves, 'cause they ain't as clean as they might be. That's his way when I don't give him any beer. Once or twice, I've nearly 'ad a go at him with a clothes prop. I'd ha' done it, too, if he wasn't such a draw." And Judkins moodily went away, oppressed by the indignity of digging up worms for his ungrateful protégé on the ram-parts.

II

ONE evening, a month after this conversation between Judkins and his mistress, Sir Harry Fontenoy turned out of the Garrick Club, drawing his silk wrapper more closely around his throat. In his hand, he carried a song neatly tied with a piece of string. He did not seem to be particularly anxious for recognition, and, suddenly stopping in a dark corner, took a shapeless bundle from his pocket, and dexterously slipped on a black mustache and wig. When he emerged into the glowing lights of Leicester Square, even the blasé statue of Shakespeare in the middle of it, although staring straight toward him, did not appear to know who he was. A man he had met at the Garrick half an hour ago, brushed hastily past without recognizing him. Thus reassured, Sir Harry continued on his way until he came to a narrow alley leading to the stage entrance of "The Alhambra Music Hall." Even at this entrance, there flamed forth a big poster giving out to the world that the great serio-comic artist, Mr. Harry Vavasour, would that evening sing his new song, "When the World Goes Round, We're Upside Down."

Sir Harry looked at the poster with a grin. "Jove, if the *mater* only found out that I'm earning my living, she'd have a fit. She little knows I've been making a hundred a week for the last five years. And she doesn't know that I know she and Judkins have also been making a pot of money by using that immoral old jackdaw as a decoy-duck to the castle. Well, well, it's a rum world. This is my last night at 'The Halls.' Then, I return to my own halls with Letty and Babs. Where are my lozenges? Ah, that's all right. Now, how does it go? Tra-la-la!

"When the world goes round we are upside down,

So a very wise man has said;
But the angriest man can't swear or frown
If he stands on the top of his head."

Rubbish, but the chorus is good. Now to get it off my chest, and back to Letty and Babs. Wouldn't the *mater* be

surprised if she were to see Babs! There's more blue blood in the three of us than in the rest of the United Kingdom put together."

He nodded gaily to the sphinx-like, little, old man whose ruffled gray eyebrows gave him the appearance of a benevolent hyena in a pigeonhole.

"Good evenin', Mr. Vavasour," said the little, old man. "How's Mrs. Vavasour doin' at 'The Troc'?"

"Coining money," said Sir Harry. "Babs was asking after you this morning, Binks. She wanted me to bring her down to see you."

Binks poked his head through the little pigeonhole, and there was a blush of pleasure on his weather-beaten countenance. "I've taken the liberty, Mr. Vavasour, sir. A small reminder, sir. A—a gollywog for Miss Babs—a reg'lar black un. I got one of the carpenters to give it an extra coat of paint, and whiten its teeth. Miss Babs can't abear gollywogs with yellow teeth. P'r'aps you wouldn't mind givin' it to Miss Babs, sir, with Binks's love."

Sir Harry took it, heartily. "Look here, Binks, you're an unscrupulous old ruffian! What on earth do you mean by wasting your substance on a wealthy infant like Babs? She's heaps of toys; but she always seems to fancy yours more than any of the others. Mrs. Vavasour shall bring her down to see you in a day or two. Or, better still, run up to us to-morrow morning. I'll let Babs know you're coming."

He went down a narrow stone passage which was faintly illuminated with gas-jets, guarded by wire netting. Along the walls were ranged notices setting forth severe penalties for talking in the wings. A little further on was a recondite request to "Wipe your Trilbies." He wiped his "Trilbies," and entered the little room allotted to him, in order to "make up." He broadened his nose until it had a comic look, darkened his eyebrows, stuck a flaring dab of rouge on each cheek, then sauntered to the wings, and waited for his number to go up.

It was a strange world. The ballet

was just over, and carpenters scurried about with huge pieces of scenery. They resembled ants dragging preposterous burdens. Fair Amazons, in impossible costumes, gave up their "props" to an old, Fagin-like man who seemed to keep a small shop at the back of the stage. Two gorgeous flunkies with swaggering, quivering calves, attended to put up "Mr. Vavasour's" number. They cast glances of admiration at him, and waited till the great man was ready.

Sir Harry nodded carelessly, as the orchestra struck up the opening bars of, "When the World Goes Round;" then, stuck his hat on the back of his head, and lounged into the glare of the footlights.

As he opened his song, he looked at the sea of faces before him. Though they were too far off for him to distinguish any individual features, they all seemed to be on the broad grin. In private life, Sir Harry was not conscious that he was funny; it was Letty De Montalon who had made the discovery that, with proper training, he could be very funny—in public. He alone had penetrated his old playmate's disguise. She, the only daughter of a house as ancient as his own, had gone on the music-hall stage under an assumed name, to make money. As soon as she had made enough to live on, she intended to go back to Montalon, and resume her ordinary life. Moved by compassion for Sir Harry's impecuniosity, and his ardent desire to do something, she had taken unheard-of pains to train him for the music-hall stage. He had a good voice, some knowledge of music, and any amount of perseverance. In three months, he made his *début*; in six months, he was getting forty pounds a week; in nine months, he married Letty De Montalon at a registry office; and now there was—Babs.

Babs was already four, although it seemed impossible to believe it. In five years, Sir Harry had made a fortune. Letty had worked for nearly seven; she also had made a fortune. On the whole, they had not spent more

than eight hundred a year between them. Any extravagance they committed was on Babs's behalf; but Babs was always worth it, with her big, blue eyes, golden hair, blue blood, and all the winning ways of childhood—ways which had subjugated the worthy Binks, and made him her slave forever.

Sir Harry sang his song to a sea of grinning faces, was encored three times, then leisurely sauntered back to the wings, nodded to Binks on his way out, and stopped short, suddenly. "By the way, Binks, come out of your den a moment. This is my last night here. I want to speak to you."

Binks shuffled out. He was bent and wizened and gray, and seemed lost in the narrow passage. He was very thin, too, with a little dry, habitual cough.

Sir Harry looked at him, compassionately. "We've a surprise in store for you, Binks. How would you like to live in the country?"

Binks shook his head, dubiously. "You wasn't thinkin' of shovin' me into a 'ome for invalids, or any nonsense of that sort, Mr. Vavasour, sir? I'm good for many years yet."

"No; of course not. But a word in your ear, Binks. We're going to give up public life, and thought, perhaps, you'd like to give it up, too, and come with us. My name isn't 'Vavasour' at all; I'm Sir Harry Fontenoy, and Babs is a babe of high degree. I know the secret's safe with you. Give the people here a week's notice, and get your traps together. If you don't believe me, see here. Don't I look like my ancestor in the National Gallery?" He hastily pulled off his wig and mustache, as a tall, fair young man close by opened the door of a brougham, and prepared to get in. Neither of them noticed him. "Do I look like a music-hall fellow?" asked Sir Harry.

The man entering the brougham flashed a startled glance at Sir Harry, then called to his coachman, "The Trocadero, as fast as you can go."

He flung himself back on the cushions with a chuckle. "Wonder what

Fontenoy's up to. Why, I've been talking to him all the afternoon at 'The Garrick.' Queer fish. Poor as a church rat. No one seems to know where he lives. Can it be possible? Yes, of course. It was 'Vavasour,' the music-hall man, who was talking to Binks, and 'Vavasour' is Fontenoy. That accounts for his always being seen about in quiet little restaurants with Madame Serao. Wonder what he's up to? The last of the Fontenoy's earning his living on the music-hall stage! Of course, that's it; and the old lady—the proudest woman in England—doesn't know it. I'll make Madame Serao give him up, or threaten to tell the old lady. He's sure to be coming on to 'The Troc.' I think I see my way now."

He lighted a cigarette, and grinned through the darkness. Although a good-looking young fellow, his grin was not nice. At "The Garrick" that afternoon, Sir Harry had called him "Courthope." In spite of his South-African millions, he was not popular.

Courthope waited at the stage-door of "The Troc," after scribbling a little note and sending it in to Madame Serao. It was an invitation to sup with him and Mr. Vavasour at his rooms. "Wonder what she'll say to that?" he grinned. "If she's in love with Fontenoy, she won't lose the opportunity of meeting him. She's refused all my invitations up to date. It will be a capital dodge to get them together, suddenly show up Fontenoy, and make him go home to his mama like a good little boy. He's sure to be along in a few minutes to fetch her."

Lady Fontenoy, alias Letty De Montalon, alias Madame Serao, was getting into her cloak when Courthope's note reached her. Recognizing the writing, she was about to fling it into the fire. Then, she caught Vavasour's name, and smiled. "What does Harry mean by accepting this Mr. Courthope's invitation?" she mused. "He knows that the man is always pestering me with his attentions. Still, if I refuse, I shall have to go home, and sup alone. Of course, I shall wait here until Harry

appears. It was silly of him to accept. He will not enjoy seeing another man making love to me."

She drew Sir Harry's miniature from her heart, looked into his great, honest eyes, and smiled. "To think I'm as much in love with him as the first day we met! How tired I am of this life, although it is my last night of it! Bohemia has dealt very generously with us; but we have had enough of it. I want to help Harry rebuild Fontenoy, bring up Babs in her proper sphere, and forget—bohemia. Once we give up 'The Halls,' there must be no more bohemia. Yes, I think we have both had enough of 'The Halls,' and more than enough of Mr. Courthope. Now for him. I wish Harry had not accepted such an invitation from a man whom I cordially dislike."

She hastily scribbled a line:

"Let me know when Mr. Vavasour arrives, and I will join you."

"Take that down to Mr. Courthope," she said to her "dresser."

The "dresser" reached the stage-door just as Sir Harry arrived.

Courthope tore open the note. "Mr. Vavasour, I think?" he said, turning to Sir Harry.

With an inaudible chuckle, Sir Harry bowed. Courthope had been yarning to him about lions all the afternoon.

"Will you sup with me to-night?" asked Courthope. "I have asked Madame Serao to join us."

"Madame Serao!"

"Yes, you know her, of course? That was why I thought of asking you."

"And she consents?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"She is not in the habit—" Sir Harry began, hastily. Then, he checked himself as Courthope grinned with satisfaction.

"I know, but here is her note," Courthope said.

Sir Harry's countenance cleared. He saw that Courthope had noticed his intimacy with "Madame Serao," and had taken advantage of it. But what was his object? Was he in love

with Letty? Never mind, he would soon find out. If Courthope wished to make him jealous, he was a fool. Letty would explain, later.

Letty came down, dark-eyed, radiant, the loveliest woman in London. She had the faculty of putting off "The Music Hall" directly she escaped from it, and was simply the great lady. Courthope, as she bowed to him somewhat distantly, was full of delight at the success of his stratagem. "Can we all squeeze into my coupé?" she said, doubtfully. "Good evening, Mr. Vavasour."

Sir Harry bowed, formally. "Wish he wouldn't treat her as if she were in his own set," murmured Courthope. "You can't be familiar with a woman who gives herself such airs. She apes the grand manner perfectly. Hadn't we better all get into my brougham?" he suggested.

"Thanks," said "Madame Seroa." She told her coachman to follow Mr. Courthope's carriage, and wait. Then, she got in, and motioned to Courthope to sit beside her. "It will serve Harry right," she thought, "for accepting an invitation of this kind without consulting me. The man has pestered me with his abominable attentions for the last three months. It is time that he discontinued them for good and all."

Sir Harry was unruffled. "It's a queer business, but she will tell me all about it," he mused, "when we get home. Courthope thinks we're only friends. The beggar's so cocky at getting her to sup with us, that I'm not going to deceive him just yet. If he isn't careful, he may wish he hadn't thought of this ingenious little dodge. It may not work out in quite the way he expects."

Courthope's rooms were perhaps a trifle too florid to please a puritanic taste. He himself seemed to be conscious of this, and accounted for it by his life in South Africa. "One loses touch there," he said, "with good taste. It takes a man a year or two to get into the correct attitude." Letty thought it would take Courthope more than a year or two, although he made an ad-

mirable host. The supper was served to perfection by his man, who waited deft-handed, shod with the slippers of silence. After bringing coffee and liqueurs and cigars, the man withdrew, and there ensued a momentary pause.

"You smoke, Madame Seroa?" asked Courthope, pushing a box of perfumed cigarettes toward her.

It seemed to Letty a punishment for being in bohemia, to assume that she smoked. Besides, it implied so many other things.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid. All the women in good society do," said Courthope, mistaking her attitude, and anxious to show his knowledge of "good society."

"Thank you," replied Letty, coldly; "I fear that in this respect, at least, I cannot aspire to imitate good society. It is so—so far above me."

Courthope looked significantly at Sir Harry. "Indeed! indeed! I should have thought"—he passed the liqueurs to Sir Harry as he spoke—"from your manner that you were in constant touch with it."

Letty rose, as if tired. She had not come there to discuss her manner with Courthope. "Perhaps you will see me to my carriage, Mr. Vavasour! It is late, and I am tired. Good night, Mr. Courthope. At some future time, I shall hope to have the pleasure of returning your hospitality."

Courthope got up, and lounged insolently toward the fireplace. "Ah, yes, thanks. But, before you go, there is one little thing I wanted to say."

Sir Harry also rose. "I don't think I would say it in that way, if I were you," he suggested, with a touch of anger in his voice.

"Why not—Fontenoy?" asked Courthope, quietly, and awaited the effect of his carefully thrown bomb. Neither "Madame Seroa" nor "Vavasour" seemed surprised.

"You see, it's no good." Courthope turned with a grin to Letty. "I spotted him this evening, and I knew you would not accept my invitation without him. Then, he came up just at the right moment, and I bagged you both. Good

night, Fontenoy. Sorry to turn you out, but you'd better go. I want to talk over this little matter with Madame Sero—alone!"

There was a dangerous glint in Sir Harry's blue eyes, as he moved nearer to the fireplace.

Courthope rang the bell. "Order my carriage for Sir Harry Fontenoy," he said to the servant.

Sir Harry's fist shot out; Courthope went down like a bullock. The impassive valet waited at the door, as Courthope struggled up on one elbow.

"I give you one more chance," hissed Courthope. "Leave the house at once, or to-morrow I go down to Fontenoy, and call on your mother, you—you pauper, music-hall aristocrat."

"Thanks," said Sir Harry. "I'd put a bit of raw beefsteak on that eye if I were you, Courthope. You'll want it—badly." He turned to Letty, and offered her his arm.

"You'll not let him take you away till you've heard what I have to say," sneered Courthope. "He can't hope to marry you."

"That is a matter which scarcely needs discussion," said Letty, haughtily. "Come, Harry."

"True enough," said Sir Harry. "Fact is, Courthope, you'll be delighted to hear that we are already married." He turned to the valet. "Lady Fontenoy's carriage. If you're not satisfied, Courthope, get up, and I'll knock you down again. Perhaps, on the whole, you'd better stay where you are, and take my tip about the beefsteak."

When they reached the carriage, Letty nestled closely up to him. "He will go down to Fontenoy first thing in the morning," she said, apprehensively. "He can easily get a chemist to paint his eye for him."

"Never mind if he does, I don't think any chemist's painting can come up to mine. We'll take a little later train," said Sir Harry. "I should like to see him interviewing the *mater*. He'll keep her awake for a bit."

As the carriage rolled away, Court-

hope got up from the rug, and looked at his disfigured optic in the glass. "Get me a piece of raw beefsteak, and don't stand staring there, you fool," he said to the returning valet. "Where's the railway guide?"

The unmoved valet brought him a small piece of beefsteak on a large plate, and a railway guide.

"Of course, they're not married," muttered Courthope, hastily turning over the leaves; "that's all brag. I'll go down by the nine-o'clock train to Fontenoy, and tell the old lady everything. Then, her precious bully of a son will have to return to her. I fancy Madame Sero will soon be sick of him."

The valet silently approached the table. He coughed, deprecatingly.

"What do you want?" asked Courthope.

"I beg to resign, sir."

"Resign! Stuff! Nonsense! What for?"

"I have my feelings, sir," declared the valet. "I was once with a dook; I owe it to myself and the haristocracy to leave."

"Go to the devil!" growled Courthope.

"After you, sir," said the valet, with a polite bow.

III

JUDKINS regarded Courthope's card with suspicion. "Her ladyship's in bed," he remarked, with an air of finality. "We don't get up till eleven."

"We don't get up till eleven! Why, you look as if you never went to bed at all," retorted Courthope.

"I ain't up officially till my liv'ry's on, and I don't put on my liv'ry till eleven," said Judkins, surlily. "You can't see the ruins till eleven."

"Ruins! I want to see her ladyship." Courthope seemed to think it was the same thing.

"If you'll just stroll round till I've got into my liv'ry," said Judkins, "I'll take your card up. Officially, I ain't here at all; but you make it worth my while, and I'll just risk it."

Courthope deftly insinuated a sovereign into Judkins's supple palm. "All right. I didn't know you'd a fixed hour for exhibiting the—the curiosities of the place, or I'd have come later. But my business is urgent. I'll stroll round the ramparts while you're gone. The flyman was telling me about a curious bird you have here."

Judkins became more respectful. "He ain't curious; it's his langwidge," he said, gradually unbending to the gracious influence of so munificent a tip. "Here's my key, sir. You'll find the tooth-extractor in the shed."

"Tooth-extractor!"

"Yes, sir, tooth-extractor. Our fam'ly used it in the old days when people came bothering us. Sometimes—" he glanced significantly at his premature visitor—"sometimes I wish we were back in the good old times."

"Ah, yes! dare say you do. These are quite good enough for me." Courthope took the keys, and lighted a cigar. "Now for the jackdaw. Come and fetch me when you're officially ready."

He strolled around the ruins, and amused himself, when he came out on the ramparts, by flinging pebbles at the jackdaw. At first, that venerable bird only winked, then suddenly opened his beak, and let fly a volley of rustic profanity which astounded even so hardened a being as Courthope.

Courthope climbed up the ramparts, and discovered that the vituperative bird was tied to a loose brick by a string. "For two pins," he said, vindictively, "I'd wring your neck."

The jackdaw again repeated his impressions concerning Courthope. They were wholly unfavorable.

Stung by these unprovoked insults, Courthope made a sudden spring, caught his foot in a crevice, and tried to seize the wily bird.

The jackdaw made one thrust with a bill which patient rubbing on the brick had rendered razor-like in its sharpness. Courthope missed his aim and footing, and bumped down to the

foot of the ramparts, severely damaging his clothes in the process. His anger was not appeased to hear Judkins chuckling behind him.

"I keeps the stones loose in case some one tries to steal him," Judkins explained. "'Tain't the first time he's held the fort; and 'twon't be the last, neither."

He dexterously dusted Courthope, and set him on his feet again. "If it's pianos or sewing-machines or fam'ly Bibles to sell, her ladyship won't see you," he explained. "If it's really about Sir Harry, you're to come along o' me."

"Confound it!" Courthope wrathfully shouted. "Do I look like a man who sells pianos and sewing-machines? This is the last place in the world I'd think of bringing a Bible to."

"You did look like it—afore I brushed you," retorted Judkins. "You're sure this sov'rin's a good un?" He suspiciously tested the coin with his teeth. "It don't seem 'ard enough."

"Why, it's as hard as your skull," Courthope declared, his good-humor suddenly returning.

"Garne whoam to mother," jeered the jackdaw, hopping upon his brick; then, collecting himself for a final and cumulative effort, he said, in the frankest, most unbowdlerized terms, what he thought of Courthope.

"Who taught him all that?" asked Courthope, admiringly. "Your mistress?"

Judkins, disdaining any reply to this infamous insinuation, led the way in silence.

For once, Lady Fontenoy had got up, and was already attired in the black silk. She received Courthope in semi-state. "You needn't go, Judkins," she said, after one comprehensive glance at Courthope. "The—the gentleman will not stay long."

Courthope felt that this was not a very promising beginning.

"Now, sir"—the old lady turned to him, majestically—"be kind enough to explain the object of this intrusion. I

hear that your visit concerns my son. Does he owe you any money?"

"Oh, no," said Courthope, indifferently. "I have plenty of money. Fine old place you have here; a little moldy and tarnished, perhaps, but there's an air about it—blue blood and all that sort of thing, don't you know?"

"I don't know," declared the old lady; "and, to judge from your manner, I shouldn't think you knew, either. To say the least of it, it is unfortunate. Poor but worthy parents, I presume?"

Courthope flushed, angrily. He allowed his parents five pounds a month on condition that they stayed in a remote part of South Africa, and never claimed him for their own. "I didn't come here to discuss my parents," he said. "All the world has heard of your devotion to your unworthy son. I want to talk to you about him."

"Unworthy! Your family is recent, I presume?"

"Yes—very."

"I knew it. Of course, I cannot listen to you. The very idea is preposterous."

"Eh? What?" exclaimed the amazed Courthope. "Can't listen to me, when I've come all this way to tell you something important?"

The old lady rose in indignant majesty. "No, sir, of course I cannot listen to you. A Fontenoy can only be criticized by a Fontenoy—not by a—*a mushroom*."

In the face of this amazing arrogance—this muddle-headed medievalism—Courthope made an effort to recover his self-possession. "You surprise me almost as much as your wonderful bird," he said, smilingly. "I came here to do you a good turn, Lady Fontenoy."

"You! Thank you, but I am not in the habit of receiving 'good turns' from strangers. I refer you to——"

"Sir Harry?" sneered Courthope.

"No, sir; the jackdaw on the ramparts. I know enough of him to be aware that he can express my feelings with regard to you in language which my rank, unhappily, precludes me from using. Judkins, the door."

Courthope took up his hat. "So sorry your rank prevents you from listening to me," he remarked, nonchalantly. "I came down to warn you that your son is misconducting himself in London."

"Sir," said the old lady, with thrilling hauteur, "even your parvenu ignorance should not have blinded you to the fact that a Fontenoy is a law unto himself, and can only be criticized by his peers."

"Well, you see, unfortunately, I'm not a peer." Courthope attempted a sneer, which failed, signally.

"The misfortune would be that of your fellow-peers. Door, Judkins!"

"One moment, Lady Fontenoy. Your son has been making money on the music-hall stage. A Fontenoy exhibiting himself as a hired buffoon on the music-hall stage! Think of the disgrace!"

"Disgrace!" The old lady thrust her head forward with a movement strongly resembling the jackdaw's. "Disgrace! When a Fontenoy takes to the stage, sir, I would have you know that he sets the fashion. There is no question of disgrace."

"But there's a—a lady in the case." Courthope paused to allow his infamous meaning to sink into the old lady's mind.

"Well, sir?"

"Oh, that's all. I see you're not surprised. He is very blue-blooded, after all, isn't he?"

"Where did you say you come from?" asked Lady Fontenoy, with unexpected amiability.

"South Africa."

"Ah, I thought so—from your manner—or the want of it. Were you resident in Europe you would, of necessity, be aware that in a semi-royal house like ours, we have certain traditions which we live up to."

"I wouldn't say *up*," replied Courthope.

"That's your bourgeois view of things. Judkins, the door!"

"One moment." Courthope bowed, deprecatingly. "He says he's married to her—a music-hall singer! Married!"

"Well?"

"For an old family like yours to mix its blue blood with the muddy tide of a daughter of the people must be somewhat of a shock."

"Must it! You are evidently unaware that we ennoble those with whom we ally ourselves. Did he say he was married to her?"

"He did; and ordered 'Lady Fontenoy's carriage.' They supped with me last night."

"Ah, yes; we have the royal manner, too. It isn't the first time a Fontenoy has lied to save a woman's honor," declared the old lady. She came down from her chair, which was on a sort of dais, and approached Courthope, scrutinizingly. "This was at a supper, you say?"

"Yes—last night."

The old lady, who had the eye, as well as the beak, of an eagle, looked him squarely in the face. "Did anything happen to you at the supper?"

"Any—thing!" stammered Courthope.

"Yes; your eyes—forgive me for being personal"—her manner was sweetly solicitous—"don't quite match."

"Oh, it's a way they have in South Africa—the—the climate," Courthope hastily explained.

"Indeed! It seems to me more recent. I should have thought, if you had asked my opinion, that their sudden disparity in size began last night."

"But I didn't——"

"No, I know you didn't. Perhaps you would like to see this telegram?" The old lady thrust it suddenly under the bewildered Courthope's nose. "Read it out. There! Take it! Read it out, man, if you know how to read."

Courthope took it.

"Amusing scoundrel named Courthope coming to call on you. Don't believe him. *Noblesse oblige*. Shall be with you in an hour."

"HARRY."

"You understand? Perhaps you do not care to meet my son? He might find it incumbent to do away with your inequality of vision. He has been well trained."

"Looks as if he were going to brazen it out. Believe me, Lady Fontenoy, I don't know which has charmed me more—the pleasure of meeting you or the making the acquaintance of your invaluable bird. *Au revoir*."

"I trust not."

Courthope bowed low. "Madame, did my blood match yours, I should aspire to the privilege of meeting you as an equal."

"Sir," bowed the old lady, "as it is impossible even to imagine so remote a contingency, I am afraid that you must content yourself with the society of the jackdaw."

"Thanks, no," said Courthope, languidly. "Like your own, his retorts are too pointed."

"I shall not detain you, lest they should become sharper still. Door, Judkins."

Judkins moved to the door. As he did so, there was a sound of footsteps along the old stone passage. "Where's gwan'ma?" asked a childish treble.

"Here," said Sir Harry. "You go first, Babs, and kiss her hand. Don't be frightened."

"Fwitened!" The little maid's patrician head went up with the grace of a thoroughbred's. "Fwitened, daddy!"

She walked into the room, her large, fearless, innocent eyes searching for Lady Fontenoy. Then, she approached the amazed old lady. "Gwan'ma, I have come to kiss your hand."

The old lady's eyes nearly started from their sockets. "'Gran'ma! Who are you, child? Quick! Who are you?"

The little maid drew herself up still more proudly, as a sunbeam danced through the dusty window, and played upon her golden head. "I am Lady Bawbawa de Montalon Fontenoy, gwan'ma," she said, gravely. "I have come to kiss your hand."

The old lady bent down, extended her hand, caught the dainty little figure in her arms, and snatched it to her starved old heart.

"Babs, present your mother to the

Dowager Lady Fontenoy," said Sir Harry, gravely.

Courthope hesitated a moment. All that was best in him came to the front, and struggled for utterance. "Fontenoy, I beg you and your wife to accept my sincerest apologies. I—I am ashamed."

As he stumbled out of the room, the old lady, all her pride of race forgotten, still caressed the child. Then, she moved swiftly to the door.

"Not a word for us, mother? Where are you going?" asked Sir Harry.

The old lady nearly stumbled in her haste. "Yes, yes, it's all right, Harry. It's all right. I'll talk to your wife, presently. I'm going to show the child to the jackdaw."

Babs struggled down to the floor. "But, gwan'ma, there's Binks."

"Binks!" said the old lady, halting on the threshold. "Binks! What is a Binks?"

"Binks," declared the golden-haired mite, taking the grotesque, shambling old door-keeper by the hand, "Binks is my oldest fwend! Binks, this is gwan'ma—gwan'ma, this is Binks."

"Proud to meet your ladyship," said Binks, extending a horny paw.

Lady Fontenoy shook it, graciously. "I am charmed to know a friend of my granddaughter's," she said, with regal condescension.

"Yes, gwan'ma," piped Babs; "I knew you and Binkie would love each other!"



UNDERSONGS

IN Summer didst thou never dream alone
Beside some woodland stream that crept o'er stone
And shoal and root in tinkling waterfalls,
While from a meadow came the far-off calls
Of piping birds across the wind-blown flowers,
And deep-toned bees droned down the lazy hours?

There, buried 'neath the daisies' waving heads,
Deep in the clover's spangled whites and reds,
Didst thou ne'er read some poet's golden page,
Mellow and pensive with the dust of age,
Till woodland bird and bee and tinkling brook
Blent with the music of the poet's book?

And hast thou turned to that same page again,
When Earth had lost the old, familiar strain
Of mingling stream and noonday bee and bird,
And in regretful undersongs still heard
The droning wings and mellow-fluted notes
In lingering echoes from those silent throats?
And hast thou ne'er still heard the murmuring stream
Creep thro' the music of the poet's dream?

ARTHUR STRINGER.



ELSIE—I don't believe in falling in love.

HELEN—Who is the millionaire?

AT THE YEAR'S END

By Martha Fishel

FELIX DARRELL, patron of the arts, rich and sufficiently young, looked about the studio of his bachelor suite, his eyes veiled in reverie.

"That bit of tapestry is hung divinely—her suggestion. These rooms prove her taste to be perfect. Who but she would have placed this brass jug so that it catches the light, making it the same glowing yellow as the jonquils filling it? Who, indeed, but Kate, would have dared put the dancing nymph cheek by jowl with that dreaming monk? By Jove, his expression under his cowl seems already softened at the nearness of her inviting eyes!"

He laughed softly at the idea.

"Dear Kate!—a mixture of Puritan and pagan. The pagan within you was dominant the day you lifted the monk, your eyes full of daring; but to-night the Puritan is at hand, and, though you love me, you have said you will marry Archer."

No shadow of disappointment or chagrin was in his face. He was rather amused than otherwise, as he puffed rings of smoke into the air.

"It was like her spirit and daring to ask me to dine to-night, giving no hint of the *coup* in store, and without an instant's warning, announce her coming marriage with Archer—Archer, of all men, her *bon camarade*, her silent adorer whom she has not seen for three years, since he went to build a railroad, or appraise a mine, in Mexico. It was like her, but rather stupefying, as our last sitting in this very room, with her Aunt Eustace dozing in the

library, was one to warm my heart while it beats."

The amused mood passed. He rose, and flung his cigar angrily into the glowing heart of the fire, where it sent up a shower of sparks.

"And I thought she was almost molded to my views! I believed I had influenced her into snapping her fingers at the man-made marriage laws, for gods to break—shackles well enough for the herd, as some form of religion is their necessity; but for ourselves I pleaded the union whose evasive charm lay in its absolute freedom."

He pushed back the thick hair, now just touched with gray, from his moist temples. "I've failed," he said, aloud, in bitter chagrin.

He knew his influence over her sensuous nature had been as heady and illusory as the first days of early Spring, when the earth trembles and quickens with the knowledge of young life. But he had hoped it had sunk deeper, to the roots and fibers of her being. And she was going to marry Archer! This was her answer to him.

He realized now what the appeal in her eyes had meant, at their last meeting—her silence, as he kissed her into a seeming submission. She feared herself—feared the feeling that threatened domination, feared the moment of fulfilment that seemed almost upon her. In that fear, a resolve was born. She tore his influence from her as an unclean garment. And so—she was going to marry Archer.

"She shall not marry him! I can't lose her. She'll marry *me*. Mrs.

Grundy has me on her bodkin. On her head be it, if the steel chafes my flesh. At any rate, Kate knows my views, and, if I fall short of the stereotyped measure, she must meet it without flinching."

He turned from the fire, with the air of a student whose solution of a puzzling problem is within his grasp, and, taking up a pen, wrote these lines:

There were two roads to love. The primrose path was my choosing, but your eyes are turned to the stony, up-hill way. So be it. We'll tread it together. To-morrow, I shall go and claim you.

When the note was taken to the post by his man, Darrell once more settled himself deeply in his chair, smoking and thinking far into the night, an inscrutable smile upon his lips.

He turned into West Eleventh street the next afternoon, meeting Kate's maid, who carried an armful of letters.

"Miss Hale is at home, Margaret?"

"Miss Hale was married at noon today, sir, quite privately. I am mailing the announcement cards. She sails to-night for England."

II

THREE weeks later, the sun was striving to penetrate the gray mist that lay over London, and was peering, with stealthy eyes, into a hansom rolling along Piccadilly.

Under cover of the hansom's apron, Laurence Archer held his wife's hand, from which he had slipped the glove. Kate's eyes were ruminative.

"What are you thinking of?"

"That I'm a wonderful woman to feel as tolerant to you as I do this morning, after your confession of last night. Are you glad or sorry, Larry, that you didn't marry an ingénue, whose life had been bounded by church sociables? But don't speak. The curtain's fallen, my dear boy, on your checkered past, as the novelists say; so, no more of it. But I'm very glad we had our talk."

"And why? Tell me, Kate, why

you questioned me so unmercifully about—well, about those days of folly—before I loved you?"

"Perhaps, I wanted to have a pharisaical pleasure in the contrast between us; or, perhaps, I wanted to keep it bottled as a balm to soothe me in thinking of my own peccadillos; who knows?"

They looked at each other, his eyes vaguely troubled, hers with two excited points of light in their depths; then, they both laughed.

"Ah, no, Kate! not the last, I'm sure. Thank God, women like you are spared the experiences of the young male before he is dubbed a man among his fellows."

"Oh, you men!" said Kate, the words coming quickly. "You soothe yourselves, as an excuse for your license, with a worn-out sophistry, but while you are in the thrall of the flesh, what of the woman you pursue? Is she passive always?"

"A man worships, and keeps as a marvelous memory, the woman who cannot be tempted. Good women——"

"Oh, no, of course, good women are never tempted! I forgot." Her tone was almost harsh, her breath uneven, as she spoke. "But why go on? London is before us. To talk of serious things on a morning like this is much the same as playing Chopin's Funeral March at a wedding. Just look at those lions, Larry, crouching about Nelson's pillar! They thrill me."

But he tightened his clasp of her hand, and looked at her as if he would read the expression of her heart rather than of her eyes.

"Do you love me, Kate? It was all so sudden, I can't believe you are my wife. Did you marry me because you loved me? But never mind—it is enough that you took me. The rest will come."

Her answer was to turn to him with glistening eyes, her lips slightly trembling.

"Why didn't you come a year sooner? Why didn't you come to me then?"

Before his surprised question had

passed from eyes to lips, her mood had changed.

"It's as well, as it is. Had you asked me then—who can tell?"

"You were in a strange mood, Kate, that night you gave the dinner, when we, quite incidentally, announced our coming marriage."

"Wasn't it funny?" she laughed. "Five minutes before you told the happy fact, you didn't know it yourself. Do you remember my aunt's dazed expression?"

Her lids closed. The memory of Felix Darrell's stunned eyes, as they looked then, was like a finger pressing on her heart.

"Darrell is the one I recall that night," said her husband. "That man of many affairs and few heart-throbs was completely feezed. I don't like him; I never did. He isn't wholesome. I was always sorry for your friendship; he is so utterly selfish and artificial. I recall a conversation of his at the club one day, which gave me his measure. He said, 'Love, as I read it, cannot exist in a prosaic atmosphere. The Venus de Milo, with a sore throat, would be, to me, a thing to fly from.'"

"Don't bring in Felix Darrell's name! He has no part in a London Spring morning. The emotions this marital condition rouses are too primary for a man of his leanings. Stop the hansom, Larry, and buy me a bunch of the violets that poor little waif is selling."

As she sank back, her face pressed to the flowers, London faded, and her mind brooded on each day of the previous months, with the fascination which will prompt one to peer over the precipice narrowly escaped.

"In three weeks more," said Archer, "we must be back in New York. Let us revel in this breathing time, my darling; let us forget that directors of mines and railroads exist."

At mention of their return, Kate shivered and said nothing.

III

DARRELL was amused as he read the following paragraph in his paper one May morning:

Mrs. Laurence Archer was at home to her friends yesterday. After her wedding journey in Europe, she looked radiant. Among those who wished her happiness were—etc., etc., etc.

The reading infinitely entertained him. More than that, he was flattered, for no bidding had come to him.

"She fears me. No sign—no card. I am the peri debarred from that matrimonial paradise. But, ye gods! how she must fear herself!"

He closed his eyes in thought. She was with him again in spirit. Again, he felt her lips, her breath. He opened his eyes. These rooms, about which she had once moved so familiarly, sometimes chaperoned, sometimes daringly alone, as the moth hovers near the flame—were they never to know her again?

He looked with meditative scrutiny from one object to another; then, as his eyes fell on the dancing nymph, still wooing the monk, a flash lightened his eyes, and a sure, slow smile rested there.

"Yes, she will come," his soul declared. "Despite her shield in the shape of a conventional, prosperous civil engineer, whose name she bears, I shall one day hold her in my arms again—here. She will listen then, without doubt troubling her eyes. She will come as a passionate queen might, not as a wondering novice at the door of life. The strain in her which made her set that nymph there will send her to me, when she wearies of pulseless domesticity. She didn't love Archer; she did love me. I can wait."

IV

THE months crawled by and found Darrell still in a questioning mood regarding Mrs. Archer. He had been able to see her only in the most conventional fashion, and with amused eyes watched the clever manœuvring she planned and successfully carried out to avoid a tête-à-tête. He received no card; therefore, he could not venture to call.

"She treats me as if I were a typhoid germ. But, evidently, the antiseptic

qualities of connubial bliss have not been able to rob me of my terrors," he had at first thought, cynically satisfied.

But, when the days deepened into months, and there was no sign, he suffered an angry chagrin that forced him to resort to excesses in order to forget.

Finally, he went abroad, but at the end of three months returned, his fancy still in the chains he had tried to break.

Kate had been married a year, when Darrell became again a part of the New York life; yet a chance glimpse of her odd beauty in a hansom flashing past had power to make his pulses quicken.

"Won't she make a sign? Was I wrong? She's not a woman to thrive by propinquity alone. Unless she began with love, she's the type that could grow to hate the other in the eternal duet; and she certainly didn't love Archer."

These thoughts kept pace with the movements of his brush, as he made the most of a late afternoon in early April, to work on a painting begun almost a year before.

The studio was silent, save for the mellow tick of a big clock in the shadow, and the sputtering of an open fire which sent a golden flood over the beautiful room, and struck bronze and orange lights from the old furniture and worn silver.

The sound of the door-knocker made him look up with irritation. He wanted to be alone, and now, doubtless, some club friend was coming to invite himself comfortably to dinner.

"Come," he growled.

The door opened, and a woman stood upon the threshold—a woman all in white, with white flowers in her hair, wreathing her pale face, from which her eyes glowed startlingly intent and very bright.

"Kate!"

His brush fell to the floor, but, for a time, he could not move.

The woman entered, and softly, carefully, closed the door.

"I am not dead, and this is not my wraith," said the woman, with a defiant little laugh; and she came nearer, pausing half-way down the room, where twilight and firelight made a mysterious frame for her.

"Kate!" he said, again; and now nothing but joy rang in the syllable, as he held out both hands.

She made no responsive movement, but regarded him with a long, slow, wondering gaze that baffled him.

"Won't you ask me to sit down?" And, as he listened to her voice again in that room, his dream of months became a reality.

He drew a big chair of black oak, upholstered in worn Utrecht velvet, close to the fire.

"The saint's chair," said Kate. "Do you remember how you used to say you would one day paint me in this chair, with a nice little halo about my head? I'm afraid my coming here to-day seems to crush even my remote eligibility to a saintship, doesn't it?" And she sank down, the folds of her white, furry cloak falling in gracious waves about her.

Felix leaned on the mantel, and looked at her. Her eyes, the tantalizing lift of her smiling mouth, her serious brow, puzzled him. But he felt she had at last slipped the leash, that she had yielded; and yet, something evasive in her presence held him at arm's length. It must be that she was torturing him, only to be gracious in the end. This was a game sweet to women, and played so perfectly.

Despite her attempt to tear clefts in the bulwarks of his selfish philosophy, she had at last come back to him instinctively, irresistibly, as he had known she would. He had triumphed; she had failed.

But in her attitude there was nothing of the captured; there was rather, he thought, the proud capitulation of one who has fought a fair fight, and who feels, even in defeat, the victor.

She looked about the place, her eyes lingering on the monk and nymph. Claspings her hands about her knees, she leaned nearer.

"Everything is the same here," she murmured. "Nothing is changed but ourselves."

She bridged the past twelve months in those words. She thus subtly invited him to say all the reckless, passionate words knocking at the door of his lips.

"Speak for yourself," he said, unevenly.

She purposely misunderstood him, and, still studying him, moved a little in the chair, her white cheeks stained by an excited glow.

"You want an explanation of my coming? Well, that is easily given. Say that a whim drove me here, if you like. I come to this building three times a week—to Olivia Derber, on the floor below. She is doing a miniature of me. I've just had a sitting in these white clothes. Then, too, if you wish to study cause and effect, Larry left to-day for Chicago on business. Now, then—Larry, Chicago, business"—she ticked them off on her fingers—"make a practical trio, while a studio building, myself in this angelic gown, and you close by with your unconquerable, defiant theories, your gray hair, disappointed eyes, old china and firelight, go to make up a tangle of poetry too seductive to be resisted. Do you see?"

"You wanted to come—that's enough for me," he said, grimly. "A whole year, I have been waiting for this."

The dusk was thick now, and her eyes more bright than before, as she gently put aside his hand which sought hers on the arm of the chair.

"Have you?"

"Yes, Kate. I was sure you would come."

"Were you?"

"As sure as that I loved you."

"You do love me, then?"

He knelt on the low foot-stool beside her, and seized her hand in a savage way. Its coldness was startling. So was her sudden movement as she stepped past him to the mantel, and looked down at him as he leaned against the saint's chair.

"Don't come any nearer," she said,

breathlessly; "but tell me—do you love me? Just tell me."

She bent her head, and there was a rigid quiet in the listening face. The firelight leaped between them; the clock ticked in the silence.

Then, he poured out his heart to her. What he said he hardly knew; but it was a wild avowal of love, passion, need—of past wretchedness and present delight in her presence. He launched forth his old, pagan denunciations; he declared Impulse the only fitting comrade for Love; he spoke of her marriage as a chain of sand, to be blown away by the simoon of a resistless passion.

At last, he paused, his brain dazed by his own onrushing eloquence, which her listening, but aloof, attitude had brought forth.

"And, when I have given up all for you," came from the shadows, "we are to be outcasts together, counting the world well lost? Where are we to go—to Tangier? When a man runs off with another man's wife, they generally settle there, don't they? It's sunny, lax, and a long way from all newspapers."

The bitterness of her voice made him wince. She was battling with herself; she was suffering.

"Dear Kate," he said, standing before her; "don't be unhappy. After all, there's another way, you know."

"Yes?" the question was encouraging.

"Why give up anything? Say that conventionality is ugly; it is, nevertheless, a giant, and we need not affront it. Wouldn't a little discretion be better than—Tangier?"

Her laugh rang out so naturally, so sincerely, that he winced. He dimly saw her make a backward movement, and press the electric button. In a second they were bathed in a white, blinding light. It showed his face pallid and wondering. It showed her pale, too, but smiling with a mixture of open amusement and mockery.

"I felt it! So—this was what it all meant? All your vaunted theories conclude that way, do they? Just

the usual, banal game of petty deceit!"

She was drawing on her long gloves. Darrell seemed to feel the sea beneath him. The dazed speculation of his eyes must be answered.

"Now, although my brougham is waiting, and I am due at a dinner," she said, amiably, "I'll tell you why I came to-day. I didn't love my husband when I married him—that you know. When I felt myself growing to love him, I felt that, if I had never listened to you, I should have loved him. The happiest marriage, from the very meaning of life, must have something of sameness in its peaceful rhythm. I began to fret against it—to wonder if this sweet tranquillity were not stupid, compared with the raptures of uncertainty, of the love unbound of which you used to talk. In fact, my memory was poisoned by you. I could not see the charm of the pure lyric of my life. My imagination was haunted by your words, as by some sensuous Eastern

music. Did I love you, I asked myself, or was your power over me born of a woman's perversity, the charm of something fantastic, feared and not understood?"

She paused. His dull eyes shot forth an angry gleam, as her glance swept leisurely over him.

"So, I came to hear you out—to know myself. No half-measures! I came into the lion's mouth, my dear Felix, and I find the lion—toothless."

She drew her cloak about her.

"How glad I am! How free I am of you, forever! How I love Larry this very moment! As a man with his hand honestly against the granite laws that confine human passion, you were dangerous, but I respected your fearlessness. As the smug sinner counseling discretion, you are tiresome."

She opened the door. He shuddered. It was the most mortifying moment of his life.

"Good-bye," she laughed. "Be a bold sinner, or a good man."

The door closed softly behind her.



FAIR AND DEAR

"HOW fair thou art! how fair!" So the young lover
Praises each grace,
Each strange, new charm his joyous eyes discover
In her sweet form and face.

But happier far is he, the gray old lover
Of many a year,
Who still can say, when life's best joy is over,
"How dear thou art! how dear!"

MADLINE BRIDGES.



EVEN the sea has its ups and downs.



"WHAT can I take to cure my kleptomania?"
"Don't take anything; then you'll soon be cured."

THE PLAIN OF A POETESS

By Ethel M. Kelley

I WROTE a poem of a heart,
That yearned all unrequited;
I polished it with all my art,
Reviewed it, quite delighted!
But, "Ah!" my friends bewailed apart,
"Poor child, her life is blighted!"

I wrote some verses to a ghost;
And then, in manner rougher,
I wrote a ballad to a most
Disreputable duffer!
And still my friends, a mournful host:
"Poor thing, how she must suffer!"

And once I wrote a sweetheart song
(Although I never had one),
Alliterative it was, and long,
A bitter and a bad one!
"Who was the man?" the chorus strong.
"He must have been a sad one!"

A sonnet on betrothal made
I then, an effort bolder;
In exigence of metre, laid
"My head upon his shoulder."
"A fickle creature, I'm afraid.
How quickly she consoled her!"

A problem takes away my breath,
And does not cease to flurry me
Till, like my Lady of Macbeth,
I wring my hands, and worry me.
If I should write an ode to Death,
Would they prepare to bury me?

If anybody doesn't know,
Then won't somebody tell 'em,
That all these narratives of woe
We print and bind in vellum,
Are never just exactly so—
Or else we shouldn't sell 'em!



HE—I am crazy to kiss you!
SHE—When I am crazy I'll let you.

A WOODLAND AWAKENING

A WHISPER trembles down the valley,
A stir awakes the drowsy glen
To council chat and mating rally
Of bobolink and thrush and wren.

The yellow-hammer raps his gavel
Upon the hollow rampick wood,
And sessions of the birds unravel
The silences of solitude.

The flute of lark and wild canary,
The eloquence of pattering rain—
Evangelists of bud and berry—
Recall the world to joy again.

By miracle of sun and showers,
By exorcism of the dew,
Unfold the dimples of the flowers
From glance of gold and blush of blue.

The buttercup, a child of laughter,
The treasurer of wind and wold,
Follows the breeze, and scatters after
Her dividends of fragrant gold.

Patches of crowding bluets tremble
Upon the breast of the ravine,
Pleiads of turquoise that assemble
And glimmer on a sky of green.

The wild wistaria and bramble
To ledge of flint and moss aspire,
And from the summit of their ramble
Send back their messages of fire—

The rockets of their falling flowers,
Signals of white and purple flame,
To light the triumph of the showers,
And give the Summer sun his fame.

A word is spreading, mad and merry;
A whisper deepens down the glen—
Evangelists of bird and berry
Recall the world to joy again!

ALOYSIUS COLL.

AN EVENING MUSICALE

By May Isabel Fisk

SCENE—A conventional, but rather over-decorated, drawing-room. Grand piano drawn conspicuously to centre of floor. Rows of camp-chairs. It is ten minutes before the hour of invitation. **THE HOSTESS**, a large woman, is costumed in yellow satin, embroidered in spangles. Her diamonds are many and of large size. She is seated on the extreme edge of a chair, struggling with a pair of very long gloves. She looks flurried and anxious. **POOR RELATIVE**, invited as a "great treat," sits opposite. Her expression is timid and apprehensive. They are the only occupants of the room.

HOSTESS—No such thing, Maria. You look all right. Plain black is always very genteel. Nothing I like so well for evening, myself. Just keep your face to the wall as much as you can, and the worn places will never show. You can take my écarle scarf, if you wish, and that will cover most of the spots. I don't mean my new scarf—the one I got two years ago. It's a little torn, but it won't matter—for you. I think you will find it on the top shelf of the store-room closet on the third floor. If you put a chair on one of the trunks, you can easily reach it. Just wait a minute, till I get these gloves on; I want you to button them. I do hope I haven't forgotten anything. Baron von Gosheimer has promised to come. I have told everybody. It would be terrible if he should disappoint me.

MASCULINE VOICE FROM ABOVE—Sarah, where the devil have you put my shirts? Everything is upside down in my room, and I can't find

them. I pulled every blessed thing out of the chiffonier and wardrobe, and they're not there!

HOSTESS—Oh, Henry! You must hurry—I'm going to use your room for the gentlemen's dressing-room, and it's time now for people to come. You must hurry.

HOST (from above, just as front door opens, admitting **BARON VON GOSHEIMER** and two women guests)—Where the devil are my shirts?

HOSTESS (unconscious of arrivals)—Under the bed in my room. Hurry!

HOST, in bath-gown and slippers, dashes madly into wife's room, and dives under bed as women guests enter. Unable to escape, he crawls further beneath bed. His feet remain visible. Women guests discover them.

GUESTS (in chorus)—Burglars! burglars! Help! help!

BARON VON GOSHEIMER, ascending to the next floor, hears them and hastens to the rescue.

BARON—Don't be alarmed, ladies. Has either of you a poker? No? That is to be deplored. (Catches **HOST** by heels, and drags him out. *Tableau.*)

HOSTESS (to **POOR RELATIVE**, giving an extra tug at her gloves)—There, it's all burst out on the side! That stupid saleslady said she knew they would be too small. Oh, dear, I'm that upset! And these Louis Quinze slippers are just murdering me. I wish it were all over.

Enter **BARON VON GOSHEIMER** and women guests.

HOSTESS—Dear baron, how good of you! I was just saying, if you didn't come I should wish my musicale

in Jericho. And, now that you are here, I don't care if any one else comes or not. (*To women guests*) How d'ye do? I must apologize for Mr. Smythe—he's been detained down-town. He just telephoned me. He'll be in, later. Do sit down; it's just as cheap as standing, I always say, and it does save your feet. You ladies can find seats over in the corner. (*Detaining BARON*) Dear baron— (*Enter guests.*)

GUEST—So glad you have a clear evening. Now, when we gave our affair, it poured. Of course, we had a crowd, just the same. People always come to us, whether it rains or not. (*Takes a seat. Guests begin to arrive in numbers.*)

HOSTESS—So sweet of you to come!

GUEST—So glad you have a pleasant evening. I am sure to have a bad night whenever I entertain—

HOSTESS (*to another guest*)—So delightful of you to come!

GUEST—Such a perfect evening! I'm so glad. I said as we started out, "Now, this time, Mrs. Smythe can't help but have plenty of people. Whenever I entertain, it's sure to—" (*More guests.*)

Telegram arrives, announcing that the prima donna has a sore throat, and will be unable to come. Time passes.

MALE GUEST (*to another*)—Well, I wish to heaven, something would be doing soon. This is the deadeast affair I was ever up against.

OMNIPRESENT JOKER (*greeting acquaintance*)—Hello, old man!—going to sing to-night?

ACQUAINTANCE—Oh, yes, going to sing a solo.

JOKER—So low you can't hear it? Ha, ha! (*Guests near by groan.*)

VOICE (*overheard*)—Madame Cully? My dear, she always tells you that you haven't half enough material, and makes you get yards more. Besides, she never sends your pieces back, though I have—

FAT OLD LADY (*to neighbor*)—I never was so warm in my life! I can't imagine why people invite you, just to make you uncomfortable. Now, when I entertain, I have the

windows open for hours before any one comes.

JOKER (*aside*)—That's why she always has a frost! Ha, ha!

HOST enters, showing traces of hasty toilette—face red, and a razor-cut on chin.

HOST (*rubbing his hands, and endeavoring to appear at ease and facetious*)—Well, how d'ye do, everybody! Sorry to be late on such an auspicious—

JOKER (*interrupting*)—Suspicious! Ha, ha!

HOST—occasion. I hope you are all enjoying yourselves.

CHORUS OF GUESTS—Yes, indeed!

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh! I have a great disappointment for you all. Here is a telegram from my best singer, saying she is sick, and can't come. Now, we will have the pleasure of listening to Miss Jackson. Miss Jackson is a pupil of Madame Parcheesi, of Paris. (*Singer whispers to her.*) Oh, I beg your pardon! It's Madame Mar-cheesi.

DEAF OLD GENTLEMAN (*seated by piano, talking to pretty girl*)—I'd rather listen to you than hear this caterwauling. (*OLD GENTLEMAN is dragged into corner, and silenced.*)

YOUNG WOMAN (*singing*)—"Why do I sing? I know not, I know not! I cannot help but sing. Oh, why do I sing?"

Guests moan softly and demand of one another, Why does she sing?

WOMAN GUEST (*to another*)—Isn't that just the way?—their relatives are always dying, and it's sure to be wash-day or just when you expect company to dinner, and off they go to the funeral—

BUTLER appears with trayful of punch-glasses.

MALE GUEST (*to another*)—Thank the Lord! here's relief in sight. Let's drown our troubles.

THE OTHER—It's evident you haven't sampled the Smythes' punch before. I tell you, it's a crime to spoil a thirst with this stuff. Well, here's how.

WOMAN GUEST (*to neighbor*)—I

never saw Mrs. Smythe looking quite so hideous and atrociously vulgar before, did you?

NEIGHBOR—Never! Why did we come?

VOICE (*overheard*)—The one in the white-lace gown and all those diamonds?

ANOTHER VOICE—Yes. Well, you know it was common talk that before he married her—

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh! Signor Padrella has offered to play some of his own compositions, but I thought you would all rather hear something familiar by one of the real composers—Rubens or Chopin—Chopin, I think—

PIANIST *plunges wildly into something.*

VOICE (*during a lull in the music*)—First, you brown an onion in the pan, then, you chop the cabbage—

IN THE DRESSING-ROOM

GUEST (*just arriving, to another*)—Yes, we are awfully late, too, but I always say you never can be too late at one of the Smythes' horrors.

THIN YOUNG WOMAN (*in limp, pink gown and string of huge pearls, who has come to recite*)—I'm awfully nervous, and I do believe I'm getting hoarse. Mama, you didn't forget the lemon juice and sugar? (*Drinks from bottle.*) Now, where are my bronchial troches? Don't you think I could stand just a little more rouge? I think it's a shame I'm not going to have footlights. Remember, you are not to prompt me, unless I look at you. You will get me all mixed up, if you do. (*They descend.*)

HOSTESS (*to elocutionist*)—Why, I thought you were *never* coming! I wanted you to fill in while people were taking their seats. The guests always make so much noise, and the singers hate it. Now, what did you say you would require—an egg-beater and a turnip, wasn't it? Oh, no! That's for the young man who is going to do the tricks. I remember. Are you all ready?

July 1903

ELOCUTIONIST (*in a trembling voice*)—Ye-es.

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh!

ELOCUTIONIST—"Aux Italiens.

"At Paris it was, at the Opéra there, And she looked like—"

GUEST (*to another*)—Thirty cents, old chap! I tell you, there's nothing will knock you out quicker than—

HOSTESS—'Sh, 'sh, 'sh!

Young woman finishes, and retires amidst subdued applause. Reappears immediately and gives "The Maniac."

HOSTESS—As I have been disappointed in my best talent for this evening, Mr. Briggs has kindly consented to do some of his parlor-magic tricks.

MR. BRIGGS *steps forward, a large, florid young man, wearing a "made" dress-tie, the buckle of which crawls up the back of his collar.*

BRIGGS—Now, ladies and gentlemen, I shall have to ask you all to move to the other side of the room. (*This is accomplished with muttered uncomplimentary remarks concerning the magician.*)

BRIGGS (*to HOSTESS*)—I must have the piano pushed to the further end. I must have plenty of space. (*All the men guests are pressed into service, and, with much difficulty, the piano is moved.*)

BRIGGS—Now, I want four large screens.

HOSTESS (*faintly*)—But I have only two!

BRIGGS—Well, then, get me a clothes-horse and a couple of sheets.

POOR RELATIVE—You know, Sarah, I used the last two when I made up my bed in the children's nursery yesterday. I can easily get—

HOSTESS (*hastily*)—No, Maria, don't trouble. (*To guests*)—Perhaps, some of you gentlemen wouldn't mind lending us your overcoats to cover the clothes-horse?

CHORUS (*with great lack of enthusiasm*)—Of course! delighted! (*They go for coats.*)

HOSTESS (*to POOR RELATIVE*)—

Maria, you get the clothes-horse. I think it's in the laundry, or— Oh, I think it's in the cellar. Well, you look till you find it. (*To BRIGGS*)—I got as many of the things you asked for as I could remember. Will you read the list over?

BRIGGS—Turnip and egg-beater—

HOSTESS—Yes.

BRIGGS—Egg, large clock, jar of gold-fish, rabbit and empty barrel.

HOSTESS—I have the egg.

BRIGGS (*much annoyed*)—I particularly wanted the gold-fish, the clock and the barrel.

Guests grow restless.

HOSTESS—Couldn't you do a trick while we are waiting—one with the egg-beater and turnip?

BRIGGS—No; I don't know one.

HOSTESS—Couldn't you make up one?

BRIGGS (*icily*)—Certainly not.

Gloom descends over the company, until the POOR RELATIVE arrives, staggering under the clothes-horse.

CHORUS OF MEN GUESTS—Let me help you!

Improvised screen is finally arranged.

BRIGGS performs "parlor magic" for an hour. *Guests fidget, yawn and commence to drop away, one by one.*

GUEST (*to HOSTESS*)—Really, we must tear ourselves away. Such a delightful evening!—not a dull mo-

ment. And your punch—heavenly! Do ask us again. Good night.

HOSTESS—Thank you so much! So good of you to come.

ANOTHER GUEST—Yes, we must go. I've had a perfectly dear time.

HOSTESS—So sorry you must go. So good of you to come. Good night.

IN THE DRESSING-ROOM

CHORUS OF GUESTS—Wasn't it awful?—Such low people!—Why did we ever come?—Parvenue!

ELOCUTIONIST—I was all right, wasn't I, mama? You noticed they never clapped a bit until I'd walked the whole length of the room to my chair. It just showed how wrought up they were. You nearly mixed me up, though, prompting me in the wrong place; I—

HOSTESS (*throwing herself on sofa as door closes on last guest*)—Well, I'm completely done up! (*To POOR RELATIVE*)—Maria, run up to my room, and get my red-worsted bed-slippers. I can't stand these satin tortures a minute longer. Entertaining is an awful strain. It's so hard trying not to say the wrong thing at the right place. But, then, it certainly went off beautifully. I could tell every one had a such good time!



AT HER WORD

ALL that I heard above her laughter
Was delight for me:

"Really, you are a young man after
My own heart," said she.

"Never a truer word was spoken,"

Quickly I replied.

"Give me your heart to be love's token;
I'll be satisfied."

FELIX CARMEN.

BREAK A HEART AND MAKE AN ACTOR

By Alfred Henry Lewis

AT BUTTON'S

(1742)

IT is a brisk Midwinter afternoon. In front of Button's Coffee-House a man and woman meet. She gently detains him by a skirt of his rusty coat as he would enter the door. At this, he turns in a fashion of surprise, for, with his weak eyes, he has not noticed her approach.

"Samuel," says the woman, "I came for a little money."

The man is heavy, full-browed, ugly, of age, say, thirty-three; the woman, gross, shapeless, but with a wise, kindly face withal, is even less comely. Her years are roundly fifty-nine.

For all the twenty-six years' difference, the two are husband and wife. She houses herself cheaply near the Tower; he has a garret off Fleet street. It is no want of love which separates them; it is poverty that holds them apart.

When the shapeless old wife asks for money, the rusty husband blinks at her in a mood of thick, sluggish affection. He fumbles in his pockets, and, at last, fishes forth a guinea.

"I had it from Dodsley," says he, as he bestows it upon her. Then, with a sour smile: "It should irk a man of letters to borrow from a once footman. But Dodsley is also a poet, and a rich publisher. I forget the footman when I borrow of Dodsley; I borrow only of Dodsley, the publisher."

"You may be sure, however," responds the wife, "that he grants your requests as Dodsley, the footman. The humble are ever more generous

than the high. Dodsley, the publisher, would give you nothing." Then, she ties the guinea in a corner of her kerchief. "It shall board and lodge and warm me for a month."

The gross, unshapely wife turns homeward, while her seedy mate goes into Button's.

As he enters, a thin, hawkish voice is raised in salutation.

"And how fares our worthy Samuel Johnson?"

The thin voice comes from a dwarfish old gentleman with a crooked back and long legs, thinner, these latter, than the voice. This misshapen one is clothed, at vast expense, with full wig and suit of best black velvet, against which his ruffles make a brave display.

"The worthy Samuel Johnson does very well," responds the coming *Rambler*. "And how fares it with the good Mr. Pope, of Twickenham? Your fourth 'Dunciad' would show no fading of your genius. Egad! you smote old Colley Cibber hip and thigh."

"And have you read his letter of retort?" asks Pope. "It is but just come out; you should get it, if only for the varlet's baseness."

Pope is twenty-one years the senior of Johnson. He is rich, powerful, the accepted critic of the age. Also, he was the first to discover Johnson's genius, and has striven to gain for him his degree as a Master of Arts. Wherefore Johnson, who loves power and station when they work to do him good, is become a mighty partisan of the English Homer.

Pope, while vain, and as spiteful as a wasp, would seem to have owned a good heart under his long-flapped, satin

waistcoat. It was he who upheld Gay in the old day; it was also he who found poetry in the footman Dodsley, and set him to printing books in Pall Mall, and to writing his play of "Cleone."

Pope draws Johnson forward to a seat with the group whereof he is the chief.

The proud fashion of two of these dismays the threadbare Johnson, who is forever on his knees before eminence when linked to wealth. One of this formidable pair is the wit, Chesterfield, high-shouldered, harsh-faced, and forbidding. He is seven years younger than Pope, but double the age of young Horace Walpole, his table mate, who now, at twenty-five, shines forth, the most insufferable coxcomb of the town. Young Walpole sips his wine with a confident patronage toward all the world, an air which would have worn him better, perhaps, were he truly the son of the great Sir Robert, instead of being offspring of that Carr Lord Hervey, to whom court rumor makes oath as his parent.

There be a trio of inconsequent younglings hanging about to hear what Pope and Chesterfield and the perfumed Walpole will say. One is Fielding, who will later write "Tom Jones," but is now emptying theatres with his tragedies. Another, he of the freckles and sandy hair, is Tobias Smollett. This gentleman lives by tying arteries, and does an occasional amputation, and is not yet ripe for "Roderick Random." The pale, whey-faced, silent one is the poet Young, who is about to give us "Night Thoughts."

As one casts his eye over the coffee-room, with its not too cleanly walls and ceiling of darkened wood, one knows it for the same old room it was when Addison first brought there the wits and the wags of Will's. But Addison and Congreve and Steele and Gay and Garth are dead and done, and Swift, over three-score years and ten, with clouded mind, is dying, as he himself puts it, "like a rat in a trap," in Ireland; and, of that ancient guard, none now save Pope remains. The

presence, however, of Chesterfield and the adorable Walpole, who already conceives himself to unite the wisdom of Fontanelle with the pen-graces of Anthony Hamilton, proves Button's to have in no part diminished of an olden vogue.

Nor are these the whole of our good company. At nigh hand sits another smaller group. He of the austere, conceited brow is Warburton, the bishop. That burly, bluff, hard-headed man is old Quin, the Covent Garden actor, last of the stilted school of Betterton, Barton Booth and Wilks. The dissolute young blade of the green-and-silver suit, gilt sword, bouquet and eye of insolence, is Foote, a student of the Middle Temple. Soon he will drive folk wild with his mimicries at the Haymarket; finally, he will be crushed by that she-fiend, the Duchess of Kingston, whom he first blackmails and then satirizes.

In a distant corner, belonging to neither group, drinking his wine by himself, sits a rarely handsome man. The others would appear to know him, but they avoid his eye as though from fear. No one there is better clad, no one of more elegant manner; he is the son of a dean, too, and the brother of a clergyman. Why, then, do our fine gentlemen so miss his glance, and yet so plainly shrink from offering him offense? Why, because our gallant is the redoubtable *Jemmy MacLean*, cut-purse and highwayman. *Jemmy* is in the fashion himself, has his rooms in St. James's street, and, while he drinks wine in Button's this bright afternoon, his horse waits in the stable to the rear, bridled, bitted, saddled, pistols in holsters, ready with the earliest shadows of the night to be off with his dashing master for the heaths of Bagshot, to look out for fobs and purses. *Jemmy* will be hanged, presently, at Tyburn for the theft of a parti-colored waistcoat. But he will make his last fling bravely, and in ribbons and posies; and a mighty crowd will cheer him, and morbid *George Selwyn*—now starving in Paris as a youth of twenty-two, whose close-fisted father holds him down to

groats and farthings—will ride in the carriage with him, and catch his last syllable, and witness his last kick.

"I met Garrick up the street," remarks Johnson, gruffly. "He was too busy for talk, and hurrying, he said, to a rehearsal. Garrick is become vastly the peacock with his stage success; he would remind one not at all of the wine-merchant of three years ago, or that Garrick who walked into London from Lichfield with me, and not so much silver in his pocket as should serve to fright the fiends away." Johnson says this bitterly, and one may tell how he envies, in his lean poverty, the prosperous Garrick.

"When does your volatile Garrick wed the Woffington?" This from Pope. "Gossip makes it that he and our fair Lass from the Liffey are to trip altarward within the week."

"Davy will never wed Peg," responds Johnson, but without his usual gruffness. "He is turned too much puffed up. Such an alliance he now thinks would be beneath him, and a sheer sacrifice of himself."

"Doubtless, however," says Pope, "he has promised the girl. One may rely upon his promise, I take it."

"One may rely on nothing," returns Johnson, "so much as Garrick's selfishness. You may be sure he regards his present dainty self as far too good to keep that promise."

"To-night, by the way, Garrick will give us his first London performance of 'Lear,'" observes Chesterfield. "And the Woffington is to be Cordelia."

"Garrick?" pipes up young Walpole, in high, intolerant tones. "I see nothing great in this Garrick. I was among the earliest to invade that savage region known as Goodman Fields to look on him, and I may tell you, sirs, I lost my time. As for Woffington—a mere bad actress, an Irish-faced girl! But she has life, sirs, the jade has life."

Walpole takes snuff loftily after this. He cannot foresee how, within three years, his own sister's son will wed the sister of "the jade;" and how, when the earl, his brother-in-law, remonstrates with the jade for permitting the

match, the jade will retort: "It is I who should complain, my lord. With my sister single, I had but one beggar to support; now that she marries your curate of a son, I shall have two." And the wedding took place, and nine children came of it. But the super-fine young Walpole has no forebode of this, and sneers on with his snuff at the "Irish-faced jade."

"Some one," says Chesterfield, "should instruct Garrick before he essays Lear. I warrant you now he mouths the words as though he cried 'Oysters!' in the street." Then, turning to Johnson: "You, I believe, are a close friend of Garrick; you have a great respect for him as a player."

"I, respect a player?" cries Johnson, with deep disdain. "Sir, I respect Garrick the man, but not Garrick the player! I, respect a player—a fellow who exhibits himself for a shilling—who claps a lump on his back and a lump on his leg, and shouts, 'I am Richard the Third!' Sir, I'll have a wiser use for my respect."

"Gentlemen," observes Pope, and he shakes his plumage-like wig as one who delivers judgment, "Garrick has no competitor. I have seen Betterton, Booth, Wilks; I still see Quin. There has been none so good as Garrick; there is none, and there will be none to match him. As for the Woffington, she is the equal of Oldfield at her best."

Walpole, whose vanity seems nettled by the rebuke, is about to make retort, when the uproar of high debate comes swelling from the other table.

"No marvel, sir, you stand for Pope," roars Quin to Warburton; "he made you a bishop."

"And if he did," breaks in the airy Foote, "Warburton made Pope a Christian, so that score is settled."

"I'll have no quarreling over me, gentlemen," observes Pope across, in his rasping cackle; "I'm not worthy of it."

Warburton would now change the subject, and find one more agreeable to the irascible Quin. He speaks of his intention to edit Shakespeare, and

asks Quin what he thinks of the idea.

"I think," returns that testy tragedian, "that you dominies might better stick to your own Bible, and let ours alone." Then, Quin calls over to Chesterfield: "Your lordship, I learn, is to be viceroy of Ireland. I trust you will give it better government than we have here."

"What is that?" cries Warburton, in dudgeon. He is sore with Quin's attack upon his plans for the improvement of Shakespeare. "What is that? Do you call this a bad government?"

"Sir," retorts Quin, "I call it no government at all. With the purblind king and his German harpy, Walmoden, giving drawing-rooms at St. James, and our drunken Prince Frederick fiddling and fuddling twice a week at Norfolk House, you Tories would call this a government!"

"Man!" observes the scandalized bishop—a stanch Tory, is he—"man, one would think you held our king in disrepute."

"I hold him," returns Quin, stoutly, "and all other kings, alive or dead or yet to be born, in contempt. I am a republican. I would have hanging on the walls of every royal palace for the perusal of your kings, a picture of that Whitehall block and axe which took the head of Charles the First."

Strange to relate, Warburton and the burly Johnson are the only persons present to be in least degree shocked by this outburst. Pope grins, Walpole takes complacent snuff, and even the coming lord-lieutenant is highly patient. As for the cynical Foote, he fairly beams, while bold Jemmy MacLean, the hero of the Bagshot road, beats on his table and shouts, "Hear!"

"And do you justify the regicides?" cries the horror-bitten churchman. "And if you do, by what law, then?"

"By every law the false Charles left them," responds Quin.

Walpole, years after, will tell the story, and avow this reply of Quin

to be of all possible the most sweeping and complete.

"I would have you to notice, sir," responds Warburton, warmly, "that every man Jack of the regicides met with a violent death. Call you not that a judgment of heaven?"

"I should not advise you to urge the inference," says Quin, drily, "for, if I mistake not, the same thing might be said of the twelve first followers of the Saviour."

The discomfited bishop sits wordless now, and discussion drifts to politics.

"Many blame my father, the good Sir Robert," observes Walpole, as talk wanders afield, "for the recent war. But what could he do? The Commons forced him into it."

"Sir Robert," returns Chesterfield, "could not prevent a war. He wanted no war; but, sir, as you say, he couldn't help himself. The head of a party is like the head of a snake; it is carried forward by the tail."

A lumbering carriage draws up to the door. A footman in a noble and recognized livery enters, and whispers a word in the ear of Foote, while a patrician face, "beautiful as ever red paints can make it," as Walpole puts it, peers forth from the carriage door.

The Temple student listens to the footman; then, he smirks and gives himself strutting graces as he makes ready to join his fair one for a drive. As he passes Johnson on his way, Foote says:

"Do not the beauteous Peg and our friend Garrick pour a tea to-day? Should you go there, say I'll look in before all is done. I shall, if I escape from that dragoness outside."

II

PEG POURS TEA

WHILE our worthies wrangle over their wine at Button's, Peg Woffington sits thoughtful and alone in the drawing-room of that house in Bow street where she and Garrick have

their home. Peg, at twenty-three, with her sweet face and her genius, is an Irish Nell Gwynn without the king to love her. This latter, when one reflects on how the reigning monarch is no one better than our pudgy, unclean German, George the Second, stands the good fortune of Peg.

Maugre her youth and her beauty, Peg's brow wears that look of wise responsibility which will come upon one who must think for another as well as for herself. Peg holds a letter in her hand; it is from Polly, her sister, a girl still at school, and to whom Peg despatched recent word to come and dwell with her. Polly will come, too, and later wed that poor earl's son, the exquisite Walpole's nephew, as recounted.

"Polly cannot come to me as I am," reflects Peg. "David and I must become husband and wife, or separate. Polly shall find a clean hearthstone to sit down by."

The servant enters, and hangs the kettle in the wide fireplace. The copper kettle has the burnish of gold. It is a complacent and tractable kettle, and, straightway, sets up its steamy song.

The servant arranges a tea equipment on a side table. Evidently, from the elaborate preparation, a dozen callers are looked for. With the last of it, she lights the wax candles bristling from certain silver sconces which branch from the carved oaken breast of the chimney. Even though it be in mid-radiance of afternoon, the lights are needed. The windows are small, the diamond panes of a dullish glass, and even the little light to filter dimly through them is half-smothered by the brocade hangings.

Peg's bright, deep eyes go roving over the room. It is an apartment of some majesty; high ceilings and wainscots and floor of polished oak. It is comfortable, too, in a high-backed way, with its stiff chairs and prim settles, and prints on the walls, and mirrors here and there. Peg owns

a use for these last, having a notion to see her pretty face reflected as often as she may, being vain, as maidens should be.

Peg's glance takes in chair and print and mirror—every corner of the place. As she gazes, her face clouds with a fond sorrow. Peg is looking on that scene of pleasant comfort for the last time, and feels some forecast of it.

"David must decide to-night," whispers Peg to herself as she again sits brooding over her sister's letter. "And what will he decide? He will decide nothing. He will palter and promise and put off. We are not to marry, I know that. David is too vain and holds himself too fine for an Irish actress whose conduct, to say the least, has been much too careless. However, I must bring on the last act of our love drama. Polly must be thought of. I shall say, 'To-night;' David will say nothing. And then," muses Peg, "and then, I shall end it; I shall go."

There is a quick step, and nimble, small, sharp of feature and decisively the fop in dress, Garrick springs into the room. Garrick is of even years with young Horace Walpole, and as gaudily the macaroni; but, being somewhat the peasant in emanation, he lacks of that confidence of caste which so shines in the high face of the other.

While Garrick enters with a skip and a spring, it is from no lightness of the spirit. Jealousy darkens his forehead; he has come across fresh dulcet traces of one of those love-affairs which will ever distinguish the exuberant Peg.

"When did you last see Hanbury Williams?" Garrick bursts forth. Both flush, for when all is in, what are they save a boy and a girl in love? "When did you last talk with him?"

Peg waxes crafty; considering how she will that day tell Garrick he should marry her, she resolves upon concealment.

"Hanbury Williams?" repeats Peg, arching a brow of wondrous innocence.

"I haven't seen him nor talked with him for, lo! an age."

"Madame," retorts Garrick, indignantly, "I wish I might believe you. But I have proof how you saw him here, while I was at rehearsal, and not an hour ago."

"And is not that an age?" asks Peg, pretending a modest droop of her lids. Being discovered, Peg will be brazen and take refuge in her wit.

Garrick fumes up and down, and knows not what to say. In his soul, he loves Peg—loves her almost as well as he loves his precious self. He does not love her well enough to wed her, truly, but he could not see her with another and miss a pang.

Peg speaks to shift the subject.

"And how did your rehearsal go? Who read my part of Cordelia?"

"The prompter read your part," grumbles Garrick. "The rehearsal went well enough." Then, forgetting Hanbury Williams in his ardor over the coming production of "Lear": "I have been studying madness from a real lunatic. Do you recall how that father in Tavistock Row let his child fall from a window, and saw it dashed on the stones below? That was last week. He has raved like Bedlam ever since. I was with him for an hour. I studied him until I can mimic his rolling eye, his brow of anguish, his arm-toss of despair, his shriek as the broken little one dies in his arms. Mark you, my Lear will be a triumph; it will be a picture of the true."

There is a creaking at the stair-head; it is from a step stiffened of age. The latch lifts, and old Colley Cibber enters, leading a little, old lady who, with her four-score years, and leaning on a crutched cane, is almost a decade older than the wrinkled laureate himself.

"And where do you suppose now Bracey took me?" asks old Colley, as he and the once great actress, Mrs. Bracegirdle, beam greetings on Peg and Garrick. "The idea, too, of a lady of eighty years, and a gentleman who soon will be, trotting about to

graveyards and afternoon teas in dead Winter! But where should you think now Bracey made me go? To Saint Clement's Danes; she must needs leave flowers to freeze on the tomb of poor Will Mountford, though out and gone he is these even fifty years."

"And why not?" demands Mrs. Bracegirdle. "Where should be the hardship? I went in my chair, and came here in my chair. The day is not cold."

"It was I who dragged her here," says old Colley. "She would take me to Saint Clement's Danes, so I made the bargain. 'Bracey,' says I, 'if I go to the churchyard with you and your flowers for Will, you must run round to Peg's with me, and warm yourself with a cup of tea.'"

"Do not believe him, child," says Mrs. Bracegirdle. "One might think, to hear Cibber, I didn't want to come. Indeed, it was I who proposed it. 'Cibber,' I said, 'I will call on Mistress Woffington. It shall be for a compliment. The oldest actress will call upon the greatest.'"

"Egad! Bracey," breaks in old Colley, who is clicking about the room in his high-heeled shoes, shaking now and then a cloud of powder from his luxuriant wig, "egad! Bracey, that was prettily said. On my soul, it was! And, Davy, you needn't look so glum. Bracey and I agreed as we came along that you were a fairly clever fellow enough."

"But this Will Mountford," cries Peg, who has been striving to edge in a word, and is each time overpowered by these vivacious old folk, "who will be your Will Mountford? Was he a sweetheart, madame?" Peg looks quite tender and feels quite tender, too; for Peg is susceptible, and would fain scent a love-affair of the long ago. "Was he your lover, madame?"

"No, child; no lover," responds Mrs. Bracegirdle. "But this is an anniversary. It was just fifty years ago to-day when, not two squares from here, Lord Mohun, with a coach and a band of Mohocks, tried to kidnap me as I was returning from playing at the theatre.

Will Mountford defended me, and Lord Mohun ran him through with his sword, and killed him. Poor Will! a great actor he was, too! And so, once a year, I go and place flowers on Will's grave. No, child; Will was no lover of mine."

"Bracey never had a lover," breaks in old Cibber. "She was an example for Diana, was Bracey. And beautiful! You should have seen Bracey at thirty! A flower was a fool to her! The peerage knelt before her—gad! the nobility sighed round Bracey's foot-stool by the scores. Yes, forsooth! even the great Congreve loved the cruel Bracey, but she drove him from her. Do you remember his lines, madame?" This to Mrs. Bracegirdle: "How did they run?

"'Would I were free from this restraint,
Or else had power to win her;
Would she could make of me a saint,
Or I of her a sinner.'

"A very pretty quatrain, that," concludes old Cibber, oracularly, "and told Congreve's case exactly."

Mrs. Bracegirdle smiles on old Cibber, as though to hear of her aforetime lovers is not distasteful, even though she turned a deaf ear to their sorrows in their day.

The room begins to fill. Macklin, who gave us Shylock as he should be, and not as that vulgar buffoon he had been, arrives; the heavy Johnson comes in not far behind; and then appears the lively Foote, who, it would seem, escaped from his "dragoness" of the carriage; and, after Foote, a dozen others, among them Reynolds, the portrait-painter.

Tea and talk go merrily forward, and all save Garrick are gay. Garrick is dull, and a bit pensive. This want of flash is laid by the others at the door of Lear, whom Garrick must personate this night. Being his first London Lear, the critics and wits are sharpening tooth and claw to rend him. Mayhap, it is this pending peril of the critics to make serious the eye of Garrick.

Old Cibber, himself in dotard fashion in love with Peg, hangs about her dear

elbows as she pours the tea. With his wrinkled hatchet face and voluminous wig, he looks not unlike an aged crested bird of prey.

Foote makes a smart remark upon old Cibber's devotion to Peg.

"I heard them say," suggests Foote, "as you and old Owen Swiney would dangle about our Peg in wrinkled rivalry, that the three of you reminded folk of Suzanna and the Elders."

Old Colley snorts fiercely, and makes scornful remarks upon the unripe Foote.

"What would you give," retorts Foote, willing to jeer a little at old Cibber's years since now the latter jeers at his, "what would you give to be as young as I?"

"Why, then," responds the oldster, with a gleam, "I'd consent to be as great a fool."

This costs Foote a laugh all round. The porous Johnson takes advantage of the general mirth to win for himself his ninth cup of tea.

"You are hard upon me, sir," says Foote, feigning humility. "You would treat me better had you heard me defend you when the caustic Mr. Pope—who said he saw it thirty years ago—assailed your comedy of 'Cinna.'"

"'Cinna,' sir," responds old Cibber, interested in spite of himself, "'Cinna' is a tragedy, not a comedy."

"Indeed!" says Foote, assuming mild amazement. "Now, see how one may be trapped into error! I supposed 'Cinna' must be a comedy because Mr. Pope declared how he laughed at it from beginning to end."

It is now old Cibber who falls forfeit to a common peal of mirth. Even he, the old victim, is himself seen to grin.

"Your wit, young sir," says he to Foote, "will take you far. Have a care that it does not take you over Holborn Hill in a cart."

Old Cibber and Foote make up their differences with snuff from the former's diamond-encrusted mull.

Macklin and Johnson fall to controversy concerning the art of the actor. Johnson, albeit the pacific Reynolds

tries to lead away the talk to gentler fields, cannot repress his customary harshness.

"A player," cries Johnson, in rumbling insolence, "and what is he? Sir, a ballad-singer is a higher man, for he does two things: he recites and he sings, there is both recitation and music in his performance. Your player only recites."

"And yet, sir," says old Cibber, who thinks better of Johnson than Johnson does of him, "and yet, sir, Garrick tells me how you, yourself, have written a tragedy. If you have it by you, it would give me prodigious pleasure to read it."

"It is the tragedy of 'Irene,'" responds Johnson, his face beginning to glow. "I shall have the honor, sir, to send it to your house in the morning. It has not been acted."

"But it shall be acted," breaks in Garrick, "so soon as ever I call a stage my own."

Johnson and Garrick exchange looks; to one quick to perceive, it is plain how beneath the vanity of the one and the morose envy of the other, each for each carries sincere affection.

III

GARRICK DOES "KING LEAR"

THE tea-drinking guests depart, while Peg and Garrick make ready for their short journey to Drury Lane where Lear must walk before his judges of the pit. Now they be alone, Garrick turns bitterly solemn; Peg dons a grave, sweet look.

As Garrick is ready for the street, Peg draws him to a seat beside her on a great, oaken settle that stands in the corner of the chimney.

"What is it, love?" asks Garrick, a trifle disturbed by Peg's gravity.

Peg collects herself; she knows the end is at hand.

"David, when is it to be?"

"Of what do you speak?" he replies. Then comes a flush, for he understands how it is their marriage she asks about.

"When are we to wed, David?"

"Let us put off this talk," says Garrick, a sudden irritation in his tones. "It may unstring the both of us; it may spoil my Lear to-night." This last he gets off in real terror.

"No, we will not put by this talk," returns Peg, firmly. "It has been put by too long as it is. As for your Lear, should I bind your heart to the rack, and torture it till it breaks, you'll but play the better for it. David, we must be wed to-night or not at all; I'll wait no longer."

"Peg," he replies, nervously, "don't be unreasonable. You know I love you."

"To-night it must be, or not at all," she repeats.

"Dear, it would be foolish."

"You have said enough, David." Peg's face is whiter now. "And yet, I knew it." Her great eyes fill up, and a sob catches in her throat. "After all," Peg continues, "it is better thus. Surely, it is good to know at last and truly where we stand with each other."

"I shall speak of this after the theatre," says Garrick, still in a flutter.

"Do you think so?" asks Peg, in a queer voice.

"And you, yourself, will look at it in another light to-morrow."

"Perhaps," says Peg.

It is a night when the taverns, the coffee-houses and the clubs give up their last man in favor of the theatre. Box and gallery, pit and stall, are packed; the high and the low are come. It is a throng much mixed; the noble rubs elbows with the nameless, St. James jostles St. Giles, and the butchers of Clare Market bicker for places with the beaux of Mayfair. If there be common ground in British taste where prince and peasant meet, it lies in this British passion for the play. And London town turns out to-night, for its fresh favorite, the young Garrick, and the beloved Woffington, will present "King Lear."

Garrick, for himself, was never more

upon a strain; his talk with Peg burns him. Vaguely, he can tell how a calamity is pending, and how he stands within the shadow of disaster. In his shaken soul, he recalls the recent scene. Peg's manner was a threat of itself. What did she mean? What will she do? These are the queries that set Garrick to be torn at by the wolves of long-toothed apprehension. His fear of unformed something that he cannot name, now drives him cold and hot.

Garrick's is a shallow nature, all ripple and sparkle and flash; Peg's currents flow more deeply, and Garrick cannot fathom them. To his vanity, there comes no thought how Peg may take herself from out his hands, and doom him to oaken loneliness in Bow street. That she should leave him is incredible; no such grim answer to his query of "What will she do?" once knocks at the door of his conceit. Nervous, irritable, morally as well as physically timid, our weak Garrick will fret himself into a very flame of wretchedness.

Garrick thinks on Peg and his coming Lear in one and the same breath. How will he play the part now that these love-doubts are crowding on his heart? His fears for a mighty failure begin to mount.

The curtain goes up.

Garrick is smitten of terrors and tremblings. But he finds Peg's words come true; though his heart be on the rack, he plays the better for it. Never has he so felt the surge and sweeps of genius to carry him along. Now is the mad old Lear a mad old Lear in very truth; and the critical pit, commonly so guarded and cold, is as much thrilled and played upon as ever the most darkened corner of the galleries.

Nor is our brilliant Peg one whit behind. The gentle, sweet Cordelia was never so gentle or so sweet as now when the great Woffington portrays her; and, when Garrick, as Lear, in mad simplicity puts wondering finger to her cheek, with the line, "Be these tears wet?—yes, faith!" it

shocks him like a knife-stab to find on the face of Peg the wet, real tears, indeed.

Surely, for all the victory, there be acrid ones to carp, and hairsplit, and vent a spleen.

"He does not enter into the infirmities of a man four-score and upward," drawls Walpole, turning a languid eye on Chesterfield.

"The pit finds no fault, at least," responds the other, as he looks down upon the critics tossing in a storm of approbation.

"And he lacks dignity," continues the ineffable Walpole; "and his voice is too loud, and wants in sympathy. Now, the Irish jade does better, though her voice is worse than his. In the curse, too, he begins too low and ends too high."

Thus, rapidly, proceeds young Walpole in a dawdle of pretended criticism, until the crook-backed Pope comes into the box, and puts him to flight with the word that, in all his years, he has seen nothing to be the equal of that Lear.

"The dog is clever, Bracey," says old Colley, as he aids the ancient Mrs. Bracegirdle to call her chair at the close. "Yes, zooks! the dog has genius!"

"But the girl, Cibber," returns Mrs. Bracegirdle. "It was real grief she gave us, and a soul pierced through and through. I tell you that now, in my eightieth year, I've seen the true empress of the theatres."

"Davy is great," observes Johnson to Reynolds, as, taking the painter's arm, the two move away together. "Davy is assuredly great. And, while I look upon his acting, it strikes home to me how there is that to a great player, whether it be art or nature, which is beyond me either to grasp, appreciate or comprehend."

When, with the last curtain, Garrick is off the stage, he casts anxious, haggard eyes about for Peg. He hardly hears, and only half responds to,

the commendations which break upon him like a tempest.

Where is his Peg? Not in the greenroom, truly; while a message to her dressing-room brings no response save the word that it is empty.

"She will be home before me," murmurs Garrick, in a flash of hope. "How deeply shall I congratulate her for to-night!"

Then, for the earliest time, a cold thought creeps about his heart like a snake; she may be lost to him.

Garrick hurries to their Bow-street house. He meets nothing save the lone-some, oaken rooms. These would seem to mock him, since no Peg is there. He wrings his hands, and tosses to and fro about the place. He calls Peg's name.

"Where is she?" he cries.

Far away in quiet Teddington, Peg is crying herself to sleep. This is hidden from Garrick; he knows only that he has lost her.

Will she return to him?

If the echoes be honest echoes, they will answer, "Never."

Broken and alone, Garrick sinks into Peg's chair, and weeps as for ruined hopes and dreams destroyed. The candles burn out in darkness; the fire dies on the hearth, and leaves the room as cheerless as his heart. And so, throughout the night, Garrick sits unhappy, mourning for his lost one; the hour of greatest triumph is the hour of his mightiest desolation.



PLENITUDE

SO long have I desired thee, and so deep
 My heart's hid well, whose waters sung thy name
 Over and over till the restless flame
 Of Love stood still to listen, that I weep
 Now when I have thee in my arms, to keep
 Forever. O Belovèd, I became
 So perfected in thee, I have no aim
 Beyond thee, and no harvest more to reap!

So still is all the world, I feel afraid!
 Is this that mystic Silence, by whose power
 The waiting spirits of the void are made
 In mortal mold? I feel my bridal bower
 Transcendently enlarged, myself—dismayed—
 A dazed intruder on God's working hour.

ELSA BARKER.



THE GROWLS OF A GRIZZLED BACHELOR

OLD bachelors know a great deal about women. If they did not, they wouldn't be old bachelors.

Nobody knows why a woman, when she trips over a chair-rocker, always blames her husband for it as soon as he comes home.

During courtship, he talks and she listens. After marriage, the order is reversed, or else they both talk, and the neighbors listen.

THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN'S NARRATIVE

By the Baroness von Hutten

"IT was pathetic and—ridiculous, a combination that often produces great charm," the beautiful woman began, sipping her green mint, meditating. "Shall I tell it to you? It would make a good story."

Although the stories that people tell, with kindling eye, to friends who try to write, do not usually fill the friends' souls with the enthusiasm expected, I said yes, for she was so beautiful in her flaming gown, the star in her hair was such a poor thing in comparison with the two blue ones under the arched brows, that I assented. "Yes, tell me. I need copy."

"It was in Maine, by the sea. I have a house there, and spend a month in it every Summer. I am very much interested in raising—" She took up her glass, and, as she sipped, I filled up the blank with, "Easter lilies? Violets?"

"Pigs!" she added, serenely. "Once, last Summer, my maid fell ill, and, as she had been doing some rather important sewing, I looked up a local seamstress. I found her in a small, brown house on the outskirts of the village—one of those shingle-houses without any paint that one sometimes longs to see, just as something purely American, when one has been long abroad."

"She was a wee old woman, quite sixty-five, I should think, with a knot of sandy hair, so small that one wondered how she managed to cover her skull, and a plaintive face, with very far-apart, gray eyes. She was glad to have the work, and, after a short talk, in which I learned that she supported her mother, aged ninety, and that she

had never been in a railway train, I left her in the neat little sunny room.

"A few days later, I went back, for I liked prowling about, and she interested me. I used to watch her sew. It was white work—table-cloths to be hemmed, and so on—and her little, knotted, brown hands, flying over the white stuff, had a certain charm.

"Well, at last one day, I asked her what she thought about during all the long hours, while she worked alone. She looked up, startled, and then—blushed. It was a pretty, girlish blush, too.

"'Miss Brown,' she said, shyly, 'I am a homely, little, old woman, but I have—a love-story.'"

"And you," I interrupted, "said that you had always known it. That is what you call being sympathetic!"

The beautiful woman smiled. "I just asked her to tell me all about it."

"And she did?"

"Yes. This is the way she told it: 'His name is Waldo Green, and I've kept company with him since I was twenty. He's very handsome and very smart. I—sometimes wonder—why he hasn't got tired of me!'"

"And then, you smiled at her, and she felt that she looked just like you, and that, of course, he hadn't tired of her. Go on."

"Well, I asked why they hadn't married. Guess why they hadn't!"

"A family feud? Hereditary insanity? No money?"

"No. She laid down her work, and said, quite tranquilly, without a shadow of resentment: 'He has never been able to quite make up his mind! Just think of it! Then, she added that

he came to see her Wednesdays and Sundays, and that her mother quite chirped up when he was there."

"Did you ever see the mother?"

"Yes. She was rather—fearsome, but beautifully neat, and really quite well-dressed. She seemed to me like some old idol, on which her poor devotee hung all the things she should have worn herself.

"Well, one day, I went to see them, and Miss Gaines herself opened the door, instead of the hard-featured, very unalluring old servant, Abby. And Miss Gaines had a bow of blue ribbon in her hair; or, rather, she had a few hairs in a bow of blue ribbon on top of her head. She had also a blue bow at her throat, and she wore a black-silk gown. She was quivering with excitement. 'Waldo is here,' she whispered; 'Mr. Green, you know, and he thinks he has made up his mind!'

"I couldn't resist having a peep at Waldo, so I went in, and found that 'mother,' who, of late had been very well, and much in the 'sitting-room,' was banished, and in her chair, by the window, sat Waldo, evidently much occupied in making up his mind. He was a small, old man, with high shoulders and a querulous face. I didn't like him. Mother was unusually intelligent that day, and seemed much pleased over the prospect of a wedding. She had always liked weddings, though most people preferred funerals. Abby, I found, on the contrary, annoyed by Waldo's presence, and by the impending 'made-up' condition of his mind. I quite disliked Abby."

"Do hurry. When you left mother—?"

"When I left mother, and passed through the sitting-room, Miss Gaines stood by the little mirror, removing the hair from the blue bow." The beautiful woman's voice was mournful. "'Where is Mr. Green?' I asked. She looked at me bravely. 'He has went home. He—he couldn't quite make up his mind.' . . . I really wanted to *shake* Waldo," the beautiful woman went on, after a pause.

"Why didn't you? He would have been delighted, I am sure."

"Well, I did catch up with him, and—talk with him on my way through the village. I asked him whether he didn't think it about time to decide what he meant to do with his future!"

"You didn't!"

"I did. And he said, quite seriously, that he was very comfortable at home, and that it was a pity to be rash."

She paused for a second, so lovely in her amused concern that I wished she would not speak at once.

Then: "The next time I saw her, she told me that she was going to dismiss Abby. It appears that Abby had been—well, 'making up' to Waldo. I *hate* Abby."

The men were coming, and in a minute she would be surrounded.

"So do I," I said, vehemently. "I loathe her. But tell me—you saw them all again?"

"Yes; but there is no change. Abby is living in the village, mother is as fresh as a daisy, Miss Gaines sews, and thinks of her 'love-story,' and grows older; and Waldo—" the men had come—"and Waldo is still trying to make up his mind!"



SMATHERS (*consolingly*)—After all, marriage is a lottery.

DE VORSE—Yes; but the courts will not recognize alimony as a gambling debt.



IN these later days, riches take automobiles and ride away.

THE PROFESSOR'S LOVE-STORY

*Though my professor doesn't marry—
Apologies to Mr. Barrie!*

IN May, in May, one genial May,
I shut my stuffy study up,
And set forth on a woody way
To drink the nectar from her cup.
There, alien from the joys of love,
I came upon Aspasia,
Her white arms filled with blossoms of
Robinia Pseudacacia.

Which were the sweeter, they or she?
No problem that, to stagger one!
A look, a smile—oh, heart of me,
Behold thy schooling all undone!
And on succeeding days were seen
This don and his *Dulcinea*
Out walking under branches green
Of *Fagus ferruginea*.

But not for long. I'm forty-three,
While her years were not *half* of mine.
I fondly hoped that I might be
A *Quercus* to her clinging vine—
And told her so, the girl whom I
Had once surnamed *Urania*!
She only said: "She guessed that my
True genus was *Castanea*."

'Twas quite forgiven long ago,
But from my desk I never stir;
For all that's sweet or white, I know,
Would whisper me of May and her.
She sleeps, till better times are ripe,
'Neath myrtle and veronica,
Enguarded by a splendid type
Of *Salix Babylonica*.

EDWARD W. BARNARD.

SHE WASN'T A WIDOW

"WHY didn't she marry him?"

"Well, you see, her folks were opposed to the match; and then, besides, he didn't propose."

LAUGHTER

WE laughed together once—since then,
 What bitterness of silent days
 Divides us on the ways of men!

Perchance, it is a trifling thing,
 A memory grotesque. And, still,
 I cannot hate, remembering.

Unhealed the wound, and sore the smart;
 Yet, for that mirth we one day knew,
 Not all your enemy, my heart;

Not all your enemy—nay, less;
 When, still, above my anger thrills
 That ghostly note of happiness.

Distant and faint, yet over-true,
 Strange that so light a thing should bring
 The olden, tender thought of you.

MC CREA PICKERING.



THE LORD OF CREATION

SOME men don't know how much they are worth; most don't know how little.
 The boy of twelve who doesn't know more than his father, needs attention.
 Man is not satisfied to know a thing; he must have everybody else know it.
 "Fools go in crowds;" man loves companionship.

It is wiser for man to trust to his luck than to his wits; he is likely to have
 more of the former than the latter.

If there is anything that a man doesn't know, he doesn't know it.

Man often feels that he is a sly dog when, in reality, he is but a sorry cur.

No man is the same all the time; which is why it is possible to have some
 respect for every man at some time.

Man is disappointed if he doesn't get what he wants, and dissatisfied if
 he does.

A man is always satisfied that he can take care of himself. His satisfaction
 generally ends there.

L. DE V. MATTHEWMAN.



MISTRESS—Do you wake up easily?

COOK—Oh, yes, ma'am. Just knock on my door.

EXHIBIT A

By Kate Jordan

(Mrs. F. M. Vermilye)

BETWEEN the matinée and the performance at night, Miss Cawtrety always had a light dinner served in her dressing-room. In the most exquisite of negligées, with flowers about her, and occasional intimates dropping in for a few moments' gossip, she was wont to lie on her divan in the state of relaxation prescribed by her fashionable physician.

Miss Dora Cawtrety was leading woman at The Regent, a small, long-established London theatre, whose box- and stall-patrons had, for the most part, their names in Debrett. The play might be unpopular, but the star's personality "drew," because she was an enchanting beauty who was also a tantalizing mystery. No one knew anything about her. Her history—prior to the Autumn night when she walked on in "Notre Dame," as a court lady with but one line to say, and took away the breath of the watchers by her surprising loveliness—was lost in a mist which Miss Cawtrety never lifted. She never talked of her childhood, her parentage, former places or people. She seemed born without any past prior to her twenty-fourth year of age. When wonderful things were told of her early life, she smiled. When a charming, romantic history was hinted at, she smiled. Her smile was lovely. When any one had the curiosity boldly to question her, she stared. Her stare was disquieting. She was a sphinx. She might have manufactured a most bewitching history for herself had she cared to do so, and no one would have questioned it. But Dora had her

code, and a teller of lies was hateful to her.

"If she were only a foreigner, you know, one could accept her without question," Lord Dugro had said, at his club. "As an American, her mother might have done the washing in a mining camp—and who would care? As a Frenchwoman, she might have had forebears in the pomade and coiffure line, and we'd have swallowed the whole bally thing, you know. But this woman, the loveliest creature under heaven, against whom there is no whisper in the present, whom we welcome in our homes, and need and want and delight in, don't you know, but who never speaks of herself, and about whom we know nothing—is an Englishwoman! She's never even admitted that much. But she is English in blood, bone, sinew, voice, expression, movement. Yet, who and what she was before she came out at The Regent, I defy any one to find out."

This expressed London's opinion generally, yet no one was in the least surprised when Dora Cawtrety's engagement to the young Duke of Bracebridge was announced, and the news was bruited over the world that the King had been the first to congratulate her. Miss Cawtrety was "chummy" with kings, princes and the like.

So, on the particular afternoon when she lay upon her divan in her dressing-room, after the matinée, with roses almost as tall as herself bending their perfumed heads from great vases near her, she was thinking of Bracebridge, and her eyes, of an odd, glistening slate-blue, were warm with her

dreams, for she loved him extremely. His title and the splendor of his wealth were on one side, and held her but little; on the other, he, in the strength, confidence and beauty of his twenty-eight clean years, engrossed her completely. Strange as it may appear, Dora loved this man, who happened to be a duke.

For the twentieth time, she read his last letter. It was an expression of idolatry from the first line to the last. She kissed it, tucked it under the silk pillow, her hand, with the big, ruby engagement-ring, clasping it. She closed her eyes. Far off, it seemed many miles beyond her land of dreams, she heard Suzanne's metallic French voice:

"Dis pairson cannot to see Miss Cawtre—*non*. She is rest herself, and she cannot to see dis pairson."

"'E soys—" she heard Grigson, the door-keeper, commence, and then break off. "Well, by Jingo, 'ere 'e his 'is bloomin' self—cheeky fer a Hitalian, s' 'eaven 'elp me!"

Still Dora, with her fingers clasping her ducal love-letter, dreamed on. It was a usual thing for many people to attempt to see her, when she had no desire to lay eyes upon them.

"Mees Cawtre cannot see you. W'at ees your business? If you tell me, I will spik wiz her," she heard Suzanne continue, irritably.

"Just give her my card, please. You need say nothing."

Before the last sentence was completed—in fact, before three words had been spoken—Dora's expression had changed. The dream fled from her face. A look leaped into it not unlike that of a listening animal expecting danger. She moved quickly to her elbow. Her features stiffened. Suzanne found her so when she came cautiously in, her black eyes snapping with temper. Dora heard nothing she said. She took the card, and fixed a frozen stare upon it: "Arturo Boldino."

"He may come in," she said, rising, and sweeping out the laces on her gown.

Suzanne obeyed, with a feeling of awe; her mistress looked like the dead. A moment later, the visitor entered alone, and found Miss Cawtre standing straight and tall and very proud, her eyes level with his. The man was a Latin, but his precise nationality could not be determined in a glance; Italian, perhaps, or a Levantine, or a Spaniard; so much his black eyes, his oiled, curled hair, full lips, light figure, accentuated dressing and aggressive extract of musk, proclaimed.

"What do you want?" Dora asked, as she might speak to a dismissed servant who ventured to annoy her.

The man parted his mustache, lovingly, sneered and smiled.

"In the English climate, you have grown very businesslike, Miss Jenny Green."

He could see that the name was like a lash through the thin cloak. Though she shivered, she remained with her head up, an abysmal contempt in her level gaze.

"What do you want?" she asked, again. "I can give you ten minutes; so, say whatever you have come to say. Ten minutes." She pointed to the clock.

"Then, I must be businesslike, too," he smiled. "Shall we not sit down?" She appeared not to hear him, and again looked at the clock. "No? Then, you force us both to be uncomfortable, instead of cozy—as such old friends should be. Eh? Well, I see you are not disposed to talk. You are in one of those icy moods which used to annoy your—protector. Ah, how he used to fly up when you looked at him so! He had a temper, despite his sixty-odd years, had your good friend, Rica."

Dora stood patiently, her face unchanging.

"Is it bad taste to recall those days? But I do it for a purpose. It is that you may realize how very deeply my finger is in the very good, rich pie of your very successful, flattered life."

"Let me congratulate you," said Dora, with an air of weariness. "You

speak English better than when you were Señor Rica's servant."

He laughed, and, drawing out his perfumed handkerchief, caressed his lips with it.

"Dear lady, at last I hear something from you besides the eternal and very rude question—what do you want? Believe me, your commendation is most sweet to me. For, see, I am ambitious. When you came first to Matanzas, eight years ago, and lived your secluded life with my master behind those white walls, I was a coachman first, then a valet. After you disappeared, and your hat and little boat were found drifting in the Yumuri—in fact, after your death, when it was inferred your beautiful body had been carried out to the sea—I became secretary to Señor Rica. On his death, it was found that I was remembered most generously in his will. There are those who said I had taken advantage of his condition when he was half-delirious; but that is nothing. This tells you I am ambitious, does it not?"

She was very white, and her brows met in a line of pain.

"Of course, you have come to sell your silence for money?"

"How you misjudge me!" he said, sadly. "You always did. As Señor Rica's coachman, you thought me a spy. Later, when I was his valet, and merely by applying my ear to the door heard your sobs as he beat you——"

"You loathsome toad!" she muttered, in controlled fury, like a dangerous thing in leash, "if you say another word of that past time, I'll have you flung into the street. What has brought you here? Say it plainly, receive your answer, and go!"

His sneering defiance was now a healthy thing of full growth.

"I will. I am absolutely merciless," he said, dropping his sentimental tone. "I was in India when I picked up an English paper, and read of you—read also that one of your peculiarities was an objection to being much photographed, except occasionally in costume, as Lady Teazle, for instance; an odd dislike in an actress, but we know,

do we not, that wigs and patches make fairly good masks? Well, I thought no more of the newspaper item at the time. Later, a traveling showman came to Bombay with the new invention, the kinetoscope. One of his views showed Bond street on a sunny May day, all movement and sunshine. It was most perfect, and filled the eyes of some of those homesick Anglo-Indians with tears. The foremost figure in the picture was a beautiful woman, who opened her parasol, and stepped into a waiting victoria. It was you. I sat there in amazement, and, of course, knew then that your apparent drowning in Cuba was a cheat, as I had always suspected. I fancied I was looking on Jenny Green, who was flourishing in London under the same conditions as I had known her; but my interest was whipped up when the showman announced that this was one of the few photographs of the beauty and actress, Dora Cawtrety. The people around me never knew what made me laugh so heartily. I like being amused that way; it is a great aid to digestion. Well, it is possible I might never have annoyed you; but, after a time, business brought me to London, and I, like the rest of the world, heard the astounding news that the Duke of Bracebridge was to make you his duchess. Then, I made up my mind. You could be useful to me. I first went to see you in your new play. Your blond hair was covered by a red wig, but one good look told me that you were Rica's Jenny. The result?—I am here. You think I want money. I don't. No amount you might offer to pay me would weigh the slightest with me. It is five years since the day your boat was found upturned in the Yumuri, and, since then, I've made much money—oh, very much—in many lands, and not always by very honorable means, I admit to you. You see, we are both adventurers, cheats, liars, and we can speak the truth to each other. Now, I want what money cannot buy—unassailable power, position. You can give me these."

She had turned from him, and her

sad eyes were gazing into the mirror. Pain had wiped the scorn from her face.

"As the Duchess of Bracebridge, you can make me a personage. I shall carefully select an obscure, Levantine title—no one will look me up. Even if they do, no one will believe them. Let the Duchess of Bracebridge vouch for my genuineness, count me as her friend, make me one of her house-parties, take me on her yacht, and my status becomes impregnable. I shall make a marriage for position. I shall actually live in my most impossible dreams."

He was terribly in earnest; his sallow skin had become putty-white, his nose was like an eagle's.

When Dora answered him, her voice was hopeless and quiet.

"I refuse you, absolutely."

"Oh, no; you are not mad. I cannot think that."

"I shall say nothing about you. Foist yourself on society, if you will, lie, steal, and I'll not unmask you. But you shall not make me a partner. I will not, even by a nod, recognize your existence."

"And you will be fool enough to ruin yourself, rather than do what I ask?"

"I've not admitted that you can ruin me. It's your word against mine. If I choose to lie—a thing I've never done—I've an idea the Duke of Bracebridge will thrash you soundly."

"Ah, I cannot but admire you. You have the repose of a *grande dame*—you, Jenny Green. It is marvelous. But—alas, for the repose—I have incontrovertible proof." And Boldino sighed. "I have letters written by you to the señor. You were not always averse to being photographed. I have a half-dozen pictures of you, taken in Matanzas, some in the garden with your master and mine, and in several the scar just above your right eyebrow shows plainly. I'll suggest to the duke that he send them to the most important people in Matanzas, to the *alcalde*, and ask the history of the original. Can you, of whom people know nothing, hold up your head and lie down such proof?"

Her gesture silenced him; it was desperate. Her eyes were frantic.

"Very well. We have finished."

"You don't believe I have the pictures—the letters—?"

"I believe you never neglected an opportunity to steal in all your abominable life. Yes, you can crush me, but, rather than save myself by becoming the sponsor, the confederate, of such a thing as you, I'll sacrifice everything dear to me in my life."

She rang the bell, and Suzanne came in. Her mistress's face was ghastly, and the foreigner was bowing low with a strange smile.

"It may possibly interest you to know that I have an appointment with the Duke of Bracebridge at four to-morrow afternoon," he said.

II

It was four o'clock the next day. Dora had done nothing to save herself. Before leaving the theatre after the evening performance, a note from Boldino had been handed her.

"I give you a last chance. Pay my price, and my lips are dumb," it ran.

His messenger waited. Miss Cawtre said there was no answer, and tore the letter to pieces before the boy. She did not sleep all night. During the morning, a basket of gardenias came from Bracebridge, and a letter, asking her to sup at the Carlton that night with his sister, Lady Torrance, and a Russian prince. She answered the short, tender letter, saying she could not go, but would see him in her dressing-room after the play.

The intolerable day, of the wet, low-skied variety, spent itself to late afternoon. Dora's face was fever-flushed; she kept moving nervously, and the blood seemed pouring through her body in streams of fire.

"Get me my walking things," she said to Suzanne, as the clock struck four; "I'm going out."

While the most important and terrifying hour of her life was running its course, the wind and tingling rain would be better than the brooding

quiet of her home. She was soon on the street, veiled, and provided with mackintosh and umbrella. London roared and glistened about her in the rain, but she did not see it. There was a picture before her mind which held her, haunting her, sickening her. She saw Boldino and the Duke of Bracebridge face to face in the crimson library of Gordon House—smiling, oily triumph in the Cuban's eyes; coldness and scorn in her lover's, but with a look there, too, it hurt her to think upon.

Dora walked blindly. London would know to-morrow that her engagement to Bracebridge was broken. Gossip would start, increase, and grow more horrible even than the horrible truth. Boldino would talk everywhere. Her dead life would be galvanized to a revolting reality, and while she might "draw" even more strongly at some less exclusive theatre by reason of salacious curiosity, the homes of the well-ordered, gentle world that she loved would be shut against her forever.

She had walked for a long time before she stopped to notice her surroundings. When she pushed up her veil, and looked about her like one awakening, she saw she had come miles. From Berkeley Square to Soho is a far cry, and it was in one of the unsavory streets of that un-English district that she stood. The place was familiar, though she had not seen it in years. Her gaze drank in the sordid details of it, while dark recollections crowded upon her. But there was a more loathsome neighborhood, even more familiar, and toward that, with a grimness stealing over her face, she now moved.

In the days when Dickens wrote, the Seven Dials was a menace to the prosperous traveler, even in the daylight. Now, by reason of broader streets, one may venture there before the night falls. But, even to-day, a walk through that slum, which edges upon the prosperity of western London, weighs down the heart and imagination with crushing hopelessness.

Dora gazed about with shrinking eyes—at the filth, the mud, the carts with bad fish and wilting vegetables, the many women going in and out the public-houses, whose rotting skirts and shawls alone evidenced their sex; at the shrewd-eyed, diseased, accursed children who clung to them or lay encrusted in dirt on bosoms that were cynicisms of motherhood; at the pallid, undersized, ferret-faced men idling in doorways, and waiting for the night as a harvest-time.

At the corner of Shaftsbury avenue and Endell street, she paused, shuddered, yet turned the corner, and half-way down the awful street, walked more slowly, her eyes upon one house not more conspicuously polluted than its companions. A bare-headed woman leered and swayed in the doorway, her bruised mouth twisted into a laugh as she looked at Dora making her way among the litterings on the pavement.

"There's a toff for you!" she cried, in a quick fury, aiming a bottle at her, which flew wide of the mark. "Wot right's she 'ere a-mockin' of respectable people? Oo's she, oi'd loike to know, with her ambaril an' 'er sating petticut? Maybe there's others as could 'ave sating petticut's if they wuz——"

Dora shut her ears to the rest, for the fetid abuse was taken up along the doorways and windows of the street. She turned into Great Earl street, and came out again on Shaftsbury avenue. She was sobbing so uncontrollably that she had to draw her veil down. But something made her pause; the tears seemed to freeze on her cheeks, the sobs to hide in her heart. She gazed with intimate comprehension at a sight familiar enough to the people passing indifferently.

A small girl stood before the window of a fried fish-shop. The stupid and unimaginative would have laughed at her, she was so whimsically dreadful. Eight years of age, perhaps, but the wisdom of fifty dark years flickered evilly from beneath her red lids. Her rags might have been put on in a Mephistophelian humor, for the

point of the colorless, rotting shawl trailed behind her in the mud; the wreck of a man's boots was on her feet; on her dry hair, gray with dust, and elaborately frizzed, there was a woman's hat on which the bare spine of a deceased plume stood straight; and a dotted veil covered her face, with holes large enough to make doorways for every feature.

As Dora bent over her, the small creature looked up. A dull antagonism came into her leaden eyes.

"Come with me. I'll give you something very nice to eat," Dora said, in a pleading, breathless way. There was a desperate brightness in her face.

"Garn!" The child drew back, sullenly.

"Are you afraid of me?"

"Yus."

"Why are you?"

"'Cos."

"I know," Dora said, suddenly, with a heavy sigh; "you think I'm from the church school."

"Yus. I don't goes 'long o' thim."

"But I'm not. I'm an actress. Now, will you come?"

"In a theayter?"

"Yes."

The child allowed Dora to take her hand; she even allowed herself to be placed in a cab. Her round, pink-lidded eyes did not leave Dora's face for a second during the drive to the theatre. At last, she spoke.

"Har you the loidy wot heats the live snikes, an' mikes them come out of 'er hear?"

When Dora had to deny this distinction, the child withdrew her gaze, and sank into inertia.

III

THE play was over. Dora went into her dressing-room, and closed the door. She was alone, in the grave-clothes of Juliet, white lily buds woven in her fair hair, which fell to her waist in glistening lengths. She listened to the voices and tread of the scene-shifters pushing the tomb of the Capulets into its nightly limbo. She was

waiting for Bracebridge, and for the death of her happiness. When he came at the appointed time, the stricken look she had anticipated upon his face, she was so like the risen dead she had impersonated that a chill rippled over him.

Dora spoke first. The words were like small, cold drops.

"You need not tell me. I know you have seen Boldino. You have heard about me."

His honest eyes were clouded; indeed, there was a look of tears about them, as he laid four photographs upon the table, pictures of a girl Dora had thought dead and out of sight forever.

"It is as true, then, as I felt it must be, with such proof," he said, and looked away from her because it was unbearable. "Why did you make me love you?" he asked, miserably.

"Make you?" Dora faltered.

"By seeming to be what—what you are not."

"I did not lie to you, did I? When you questioned me, I told you my life had been a painful one, a dark one. You took me on faith. There is a jailer called Circumstance. Had I told you what horrors this jailer had locked me with, I should have lost you. I was not brave enough, you see. Besides, I felt bitter—not guilty."

She moved a chair to Bracebridge, and sat down near him.

"There is something Boldino left unsaid. You shall know that."

"If you could say it wasn't true!" Bracebridge prayed, leaning forward. "It seems impossible. Say it isn't true. Make me believe in you, Dora. Nothing else counts."

She moved her head, sadly.

"Though it seems impossible, it is true. How it came to be true, you shall hear." She went to him, and for a moment laid her hands upon his shoulders. "I am going to speak to you, dear, with such honesty as the dying give to those who wait for their last words. I am asking for no mercy because you love me. I am asking only for understanding. Before you

say good-bye to me to-night, I want you to say, once, that you see how I had no choice, how it had to be."

She began to pace between the long mirror and the couch, while Bracebridge watched her in dumb dismay. She to be the heroine of Boldino's disclosures—she who seemed at this moment to be so much more a spirit than a woman! He looked at the pale, perfect face, the woe of Calvary in the eyes, her softness, piteousness, helplessness. Nature had fashioned her for an infernal hypocrisy—since she was Jenny Green.

"Boldino," Dora commenced, in quiet tones, "knew me in Cuba, knew my life there. You shall hear what it was before that time, and after it. I was born in a London slum. I passed the house to-day. The tipsy woman who flung a bottle after me as I went by was curiously like the woman I called my mother. Whether she was or not I do not know. I was about ten years of age, a dirty, hungry, beaten animal, when I had what might be called my first experience of life. I was begging in a street in Soho. I may have been stealing, too—I do not know. I have a faint memory of sometimes taking things from people and places, and bringing them to my mother; so, possibly, I was plying both my trades, thieving and begging."

Bracebridge had open unbelief on his face. She even smiled at the look.

"It seems hard to take this in. As I stand here, I dare say I might serve as a human evidence of the text that out of evil good may come; or, perhaps, the water-lily born of filth is the simile suggested to you?" she asked, in wild self-mockery. "At any rate, it is true that I was begging in Soho—and, perhaps, stealing—at the age of ten. I remember a stout, dark-eyed man stopping to look at me with such inquiry and sharpness that I took to my heels, fearing arrest. Though he was heavy, he ran, and at last caught me. He was most friendly, and the outcome was my introduction to his wife in a room back of a public bar. I remember him saying to her, 'Look

closely. When the dirt is gone, she'll be a beauty.' I have a faint idea that I had not the slightest longing to see my mother. These people, Monsieur and Madame Villeneuve, fed me well. Soon I, and a few other female children, were taken across water to a strange city. There, in Paris, I settled down to a new existence under the espionage of the Villeneuves. For three years, I worked as a servant in their house, except during certain hours, when I, with the rest, was taught stage-dancing. I was thirteen, and large for my age, when I was put into a fancy costume, and placed on the stage at the back of the Villeneuve café to do my 'turn.' After dancing, I was sent among the men at the tables to drink with them, and so prevail upon them to buy more. I hardly recall the details of that experience. Time has very mercifully wiped away their clear memory, but, doubtless, they were in keeping with that environment. My mind was dark, my soul asleep, my eyes looked on vice, unshrinkingly. At thirteen, I could not write my name.

"Among the occasional frequenters of this cheap café, there was one rich man who drank champagne. He was a Cuban, named Tomaso Rica. One night, when it was discovered that I had smallpox, they put me on the Wintry street, wrapped in a blanket, to wait there for the hospital wagon. Rica befriended me. I learned afterward that the nurses in the hospital were lavishly paid by him for watching me and caring for me so that my face should not be scarred. When I was better, he took me to Dieppe, calling me his niece, and there I came slowly back to health. No father could have been kinder. Was it strange that I felt for him, for the first time in my life, a human affection?"

She did not expect an answer, and Bracebridge, sitting motionless, had none to give.

"Rica had me taught privately for a year. Then, he took me to a convent school in Passy. There," she said, in a thrilling voice, "light, intel-

ligence, seemed to burst into flower slowly within me. I came to look on the world with informed eyes. Christmas and Easter were spent with my guardian. He took me to the opera, the theatres; I had books, pretty clothes, trinkets. We drove in the Bois. I was taught to ride. I was taught to sing. I saw no one else. I never questioned his right to own me, any more than a kitten, that had been almost stoned to death, would question, if it could, the right of whoever might take it in to house it, warm it, save it."

She was silent a moment, then said, without shame, even with a proud defiance:

"Now, you know how I came to go to Cuba with Rica. I was sixteen years of age. I had not a friend in the world but him. In fact, I knew nothing of life save through him. No Eastern girl in a harem could feel more grateful to a master than I did to him. There was not a more willing slave on earth. By this time, I knew the world's difference between right and wrong. The books I had read, plays I had seen, things my schoolmates had said, had by degrees made me aware of moral values; but the realization was dull and indifferent. All of my early life, and the fatality which had led me into Rica's power while I was still a sleeping soul, robbed the knowledge of the force it would have had in the mind of a girl who had developed from the beginning under ordinary influences, in the normal way. I began to see it would have been better if I could have been like the other girls, who watched me with a shrinking curiosity as I rode or drove or walked with Rica. But I could not help being what I was, and I did not hope to be anything else. Besides, Rica, in reality a bad man, represented all the kindness I had personally known. These things are comparative."

She paused, then asked, with sudden pleading: "Do you understand at all?"

Bracebridge had covered his eyes with his fingers.

"It is terrible," he said.

"Ah, you see the hideousness of it, but you do not understand," she answered, desperately. "But wait. You must see—you must acquit me."

There were tears and passion in her voice when, after a moment, she resumed the story:

"How did I come at last to feel a haunting horror of myself in that beautiful, Cuban *casa*, where all was luxury, roses, sunshine? Not suddenly; not in a moment, nor an hour, nor a day. But, by degrees, I came to regard myself from a viewpoint that had been impossible before. As usual, with a woman, it was love, a pure, impulsive love, which brought self-knowledge.

"An English boy came to live in Matanzas. His mother had married the French consul there. We two, neither of us twenty, loved with a pure idealism for a little while, as Héloïse and Abélard loved. But, young though he was, he knew what I had not yet divined—the everlasting quality of the taint upon me—that I *must* drown, because, as a moral pariah, the world's opinion was a stone to drag me down, though I might try to rise, and pray, and try, and pray—and *pray!*" she cried, bitterly. "He talked of it to me frankly, and grieved that he could not marry me.

"Rica came upon us one early morning as we met secretly by the fountain in the cathedral garden. After that, his jealousy made him cruel. He told me then, for the first time, the truth about myself. Oh, he said some things to be remembered till I die. The English boy's mother told me the truth, too, as cuttingly as only some good women can, and then sent her son with a tutor on travels to the other end of the earth, just to keep him from such an evil as I. From the priest to whom I stole in my new agony, I also heard the truth, gently, sorrowfully, but in words that made me shudder at the thought of death. Yes, at last I knew to the utmost limit what I was. When I knew, I renounced that self with loathing, forever.

"You heard from Boldino how I let it appear that I had been drowned. I made my escape that way. I knew that only a belief in my death would prevent Rica from searching for me. I did not go penniless. I knew too well to what dire distress poverty can cast a soul and body. I took enough money to keep me in humble independence for a few years, while I made myself ready for a future that was to bear no finger-marks of my other life. I hid in New York and other large cities. I became a toiler. I made no friends. I was considered cold, severe, puritanical, by those I worked among—I, Jenny Green.

"My one delight at this time was the theatre. I used to sit in cheap seats, night after night, watching and studying. I felt that my chance lay there. I felt my fitness for it. I knew, with a sort of clairvoyance, I should succeed. When I reached London, I had forty pounds as capital. You know my small beginning on the stage—how I was noticed, better parts given me by degrees; you know the story of my success." She faced him squarely. "What have you to say?"

Bracebridge looked up at her. His eyes held a shuddering pity.

"Poor girl! how sorry I am for you!"

"Sorry?" her eyes were like fire in her white face; "sorry? Then you don't understand—not even now!"

She laid her hand on the knob of a door hidden by a curtain, and pushed it back.

"Come," she said, kindly, looking into the room, and holding out her hand.

Bracebridge had risen in wonder. The child from the Seven Dials stepped out. In every particular, she was as Dora had found her, except that she looked sleepy. She winked in the light, like a homeless cat, and chewed the end of her ragged veil. Dora stood behind her, her hands upon the hunched shoulders. In her white robes, lily-crowned, her eyes alight, she was like a pleading angel.

"I came upon this child to-day," she

said, slowly; "myself at ten—myself—except that I was even more malignantly marked, for I had beauty. Her name is Annie Mangin, mine was Jenny Green, both sodden, sleeping souls. I did not select, and, when I awoke, I was among the lost. Was that to my discredit? She does not select, and, when she awakens, she will find that I have saved her. Will that be to her credit? Oh, don't you see? don't you see?" She moved nearer to Bracebridge, and broke into sharp sobbing as she fell weakly to her knees. "Broken weeds in the stream—that's all—that's all!"

Dora's controlled pain had its way with her here. She became helpless, and wept as women do above a grave. After a little, she felt a touch upon her hair. She looked up. The child was not in the room. Bracebridge was bending over her, the look she had prayed for upon his face—not pity only, but comprehension and acquittal.

"Always look back upon your memory of me as you look now," she sobbed, and pressed her cheek against his hand.

He lifted her, tenderly.

"Dearest, it will not be good-bye."

She clung to him, murmuring, "Oh, is it true? is it true?"

"How well I understand—and even more than you have asked for. Yes, it was unquenchable purity which made you leave Cuba as you did; and it was honesty which kept you from telling me some lying story of yourself when I asked you to marry me; and it was honor which made you refuse Boldino's bargain, though it seemed to mean losing all—"

"Boldino!" she said, terror in her eyes as she drew back, searching his face; "we forgot Boldino!"

"Quite," said Bracebridge.

"But don't you see? He'll spread the story—"

"I forgot to mention that he is dead," said Bracebridge. "You see, he wouldn't give up those photographs for money. I tried to get them by force. He pulled out a pistol. My

man rushed in, got him by the neck from behind, the pistol went off, the bullet through his eye——"

"Dead?" Dora whispered.

"Dropped in a wink," said Bracebridge.

"And you didn't speak of it?" she faltered.

Bracebridge kissed her wet face.

"Ah, dear," he said, "I was so miserable at first, and then so happy afterward, I couldn't think of details."



"SHE'S ALL THE WORLD TO ME"

"MY ideal man," said Nancy,
 "Is one of power; a knight
 Of strong right arm I'd fancy—
 Far reaching in his might."

"Behold this arm," I vaunted.
 "'Twould reach round all the world!"
 "I'd like to see," she taunted,
 With lip disdainful curled.

I put my arm about her
 Ere she had time to flee.
 "'Tis thus 'tis done, fair doubter—
 You're all the world—to me!"

TRUMAN ROBERTS ANDREWS.



HIS EXCUSE

"YOU can't go inside," said the door-keeper of the village theatre, wherein a certain "Uncle Tom's Cabin" aggregation were holding forth. "You are drunk."

"Zrunk?" echoed the applicant for admission, who was lavishly and luridly lighted up inside. "Coursh I'm—hic—zrunk! Why—goodgosh 'lmighty!—do you s'pose I'd—hic—wanta see your darned old show if I wasn't—hic—zrunk?"



A CLEAR FIELD

CHARLIE—So, your mother sees harm in kissing?
 DOLLY—Yes, but mama has gone out.



EVERY OPPORTUNITY

MADGE—Did you give him a chance to kiss you?
 MARJORIE—Why, yes. Didn't I tell him he couldn't?

LA GRIFFE DE LION

Par François Coppée

LE lieutenant de vaisseau Julien de Rhé était revenu dans un triste état de sa station en Cochinchine; et lorsqu'après trois longs mois de maladie dans la maison familiale, en Touraine, il entra en convalescence et put faire les cent pas sur la terrasse au bord de la Loire, entre sa mère et sa sœur,—avec quel amour elles l'avaient soigné, les chères femmes!—le jeune homme éprouvait souvent encore, au souffle déjà froid de l'automne, des frissons assez inquiétants.

— Allez passer le gros de l'hiver à Pau, conseilla le médecin... Climat doux, pas trop chaud, calmant et sédatif par excellence... C'est ce qui vous convient... et vous reviendrez dans trois mois chez madame votre mère, tout à fait grand garçon.

C'est pourquoi, vers la mi-novembre, accoudé à sa fenêtre ensoleillée de l'hôtel Gardères, Julien de Rhé contemplait le sublime panorama des Pyrénées et fumait les délicieuses cigarettes du convalescent, si après au goût renouvelé, qui lui rappelaient celles qu'il avait jadis grillées en cachette, dans l'entrepont du *Borda*, et qui lui rendaient les sensations de la seizième année.

— Tiens, tiens, tiens!... ce Pau... mais c'est plein de jolies femmes, remarqua le jeune homme, la première fois qu'il alla écouter la musique militaire sur la place Royale et flâner au soleil devant la statue, en style troubadour, du bon roi Henri; et, bien qu'il ne fût ni un libertin, ni un fat, le marin, repris d'un bel appétit de la vie, mit sa casquette d'uniforme n° 1 et sa redingote aux trois galons

d'or neufs, où brillait cette rosette de la Légion d'honneur que sa mère lui avait posée sur son lit, quand il était si malade, et qu'il avait bien cru ne porter qu'une fois, sur le drap noir de son cercueil.

Comme il avait bien fait de venir à Pau, tout de même! C'était exquis, ce doux soleil qui chauffe sans brûler, ce bel azur, ce vaste paysage, ce lointain amphithéâtre de collines, et, tout là-bas, ces cimes de neige dans le ciel! C'était amusant comme tout de circuler dans la foule cosmopolite, parmi les belles étrangères, et d'entendre leurs voix parler toutes les langues de l'Europe et se confondre comme les divers chants des oiseaux dans une volière. Sans doute, il y avait bien quelques rencontres affligeantes, comme celle de ce jeune Anglais, phthisique au dernier degré, qu'un domestique poussait dans une petite voiture, enseveli sous les plaids et sous les cache-nez, avec des yeux de poisson cuit et un respiratoire de taffetas noir sur la bouche. Ah! cela donnait froid dans les os; mais, après le premier mouvement de pitié—l'homme est si égoïste!—Julien songeait que, lui aussi, faisait peur à voir, quand il avait débarqué à Toulon, maigre comme un squelette, deux ronds de chocolat sous les yeux; et qu'il était bien guéri, maintenant, et qu'il revenait de loin.

Et, respirant l'air tiède à pleins poumons, frémissant de bien-être, la caresse du soleil dans le dos, en toilette soignée, rasé de frais, fier de sa rosette neuve, Julien de Rhé se sentait heureux d'être au monde, donnait des pièces blanches aux mendiants,

attardait son regard sur celui des jolies femmes croisées au passage, et s'arrêtait tout attendri devant les robustes petites filles américaines, — bas et gants noirs et robes blanches envolées, — qui dansaient en rond autour d'un arbre de la place Royale, au rythme du pas redoublé joué par la musique du régiment.

Quelles bonnes dispositions pour devenir amoureux, n'est-ce pas? Aussi l'heureux convalescent reçut-il le coup de foudre, le jour où il vit Mlle Olga Babarine, la plus belle fille de la colonie russe, descendre de cheval devant l'hôtel Gassion, où elle demeurait avec sa mère.

Il était cinq heures du soir environ et elle revenait de la chasse au renard. Les cinq ou six adorateurs en habits rouges qui l'accompagnaient avaient mis bien vite pied à terre et s'étaient bousculés à qui lui tiendrait l'étrier. Elle s'était laissée glisser dans les bras du premier arrivé, et tout de suite, frappant du pommeau de sa cravache sur une table de la véranda, elle avait demandé une tasse de lait, l'avait bue d'une seule lampée, et tout debout, son svelte corps de déesse du Primatice moulé par l'amazone noire, ses folles torsades de cheveux couleur de cuivre s'échappant du chapeau d'homme et répandues sur ses épaules, elle riait, tenant à deux mains sa tasse vide, satisfaite et comme grisée par la boisson fraîche, avec deux moustaches de crème aux coins de la bouche; et le soleil couchant dans sa chevelure allumait autour de son visage une sorte de halo d'or.

Puis, soudain redevenue sérieuse, elle posa la tasse sur la table, fit un léger salut du front, plein de dédain, au groupe d'habits rouges, et rentra dans l'hôtel d'un pas impérial, en fouettant sa jupe avec sa cravache.

Trois jours après, Julien de Rhé, qui avait passé son temps à dire à ses connaissances: "Qui est-ce? J'en suis fou, je l'adore, etc.," était présenté — ce qui n'était pas très difficile — chez ces dames Babarine, et faisait partie

du peloton d'amoureux de la belle Russe.

Était-elle Russe, après tout, cette capiteuse créature, qui, depuis le commencement de la saison, galopait toute la journée et valsait toute la nuit? Oui, par son père putatif, par le premier mari de sa mère, le comte Babarine. Mais tout le monde savait fort bien que la mère avait précisément divorcé au moment de la naissance de sa fille et que Mme Babarine, qui d'ailleurs avait pour père un banquier de New-York, nommé Jacobson, avait entretenu de tout temps une liaison presque publique avec un prince royal du Nord — un Christian ou un Oscar quelconque — liaison dont Olga était probablement née. Avait-elle une nationalité, cette enfant qui avait été élevée à bâtons rompus dans un *nursery* d'Ecosse, dans un couvent de Naples, dans un pensionnat mômier de Genève, qui avait dormi le tiers de ses nuits sur les coussins des express, et qui ne voyait passer dans ses souvenirs, comme dans un stéréoscope, que les villes d'eaux, bains de mer, stations hivernales et autres lieux de rendez-vous élégants, où sa mère — une belle personne encore, malgré la couperose — promenait depuis quinze ans son ennui de coquette sur le retour, son samovar et ses ouistitis? Hélas! elle n'avait pas de patrie, l'étrange fille, qui, à côté de pudeurs de vierge, avait des hardiesses de garçon et qui disait, en se moquant d'elle-même:

— Moi, je ne suis ni de Londres, ni de Paris, ni de Vienne, ni de Saint-Pétersbourg... Je suis de table d'hôte.

Avait-elle une famille? Pas d'avantage. Son véritable père — l'Oscar ou le Christian auquel Mme Babarine ne cessait de faire allusion, — était mort depuis plusieurs années, et quant au comte russe, son père selon la loi, il ne s'occupait jamais d'elle. Ruiné de fond en comble, il n'avait d'autre moyen d'existence que son coup de fusil infailible et il vivait en gagnant tous les prix des tirs aux pigeons, comme une sorte de Bas-de-Cuir civilisé. Quant à la comtesse, malgré de périodiques attendrissements ma-

ternels qui donnaient sur les nerfs à tout le monde tant ils sonnaient faux, elle était douée d'un de ces égoïsmes parfaits, absolus, sphériques, qu'on ne trouve jamais en défaut, et, pendant une fièvre typhoïde dont Olga avait failli mourir à huit ans, Mme Babarine n'avait pas oublié une seule fois—tout en veillant sa petite fille, par respect humain,—de mettre ses gants gras pour la nuit, qui lui conservaient les mains si blanches.

Julien de Rhé apprit toutes ces choses lorsqu'il se fut enrôlé dans l'escadron volant de Sigisbés qui manœuvrait sans cesse autour de Mlle Olga Babarine, et il se mit à aimer éperdument la singulière et troublante fille, qui se laissait regarder dans les yeux, et qui, le jour où un ami commun lui présenta le lieutenant de vaisseau, lui dit en allumant une cigarette de phéseli :

— Ah! c'est vous qui êtes si amoureux de moi?... Bonjour, monsieur.

Puis elle lui donna une solide poignée de main, comme un homme.

Il se mit à l'aimer, l'honnête et brave marin, à l'aimer d'autant plus qu'il ne tarda pas à la comprendre et à la plaindre. Car il ne s'y trompa pas; Olga était fantasque, mal élevée, mais sans coquetterie, et son âme était fière et franche. Qui sait? Peut-être sentait-elle toute la vanité de sa vie d'agitations et de plaisirs? Le certain, c'est qu'elle jugeait, et sévèrement, ces jeunes gens qui caracolaient auprès d'elle à la chasse au renard et qui se faisaient inscrire chaque soir sur son carnet de bal. Tous la désiraient, aucun ne l'estimait, car nul d'entre eux ne s'était encore décidé à la demander en mariage. Aussi les traitait-elle durement, et les rappelait-elle au respect,—d'un rude coup de caveçon, la belle écuyère,—s'ils s'avaient de lui parler de trop près dans le cou, pendant le tourbillon d'une valse, ou de presser trop longtemps la main qu'elle leur tendait en camarade.

Julien, à qui la délicatesse de son cœur donnait de la pénétration d'esprit—allez, ce sont souvent les naïfs qui voient le plus juste—découvrit le

secret trésor de loyauté qu'il y avait dans cette fille de race, au fond si malheureuse. Sans doute, il l'aimait pour sa beauté, et la tête lui tournait, quand, dans une halte de danse, il la sentait s'appuyer sur son bras, dans sa splendeur de rousse aux yeux noirs, au teint de rose après l'orage, lui parlant avec abandon et l'enivrant de ses yeux d'étoile et de son haleine de violette. Mais il l'aimait aussi, il l'aimait surtout pour ses peines si orgueilleusement cachées; et il avait un cruel serrement de cœur en surprenant le regard sombre, le regard douloureux d'Olga sur sa mère, quand Mme Babarine, à son thé de quatre à six,—assise à contre-jour pour dissimuler ses points noirs aux ailes du nez, vainement combattus par l'anti-bolbos,—évoquait, à mots aussi peu couverts que possible, ses royales conquêtes dans les cours du Nord.

L'épouser! Oui, l'enlever de ce milieu plein de périls, l'emporter chez sa mère, à lui, qui était une sainte femme, lui faire respirer la fortifiante et pure atmosphère d'une vraie famille, la sauver en un mot! Il y songeait, il ne songeait plus qu'à cela! Il croyait même parfois qu'Olga avait deviné son désir, et, lorsqu'à ces "quatre à six" de Mme Babarine, où Olga traitait tous ses adorateurs avec sa franchise garçonnière, elle présentait au marin le verre de thé à la russe, il voyait au fond des yeux de la jeune fille comme une douce et lointaine lumière, qui semblait répondre à sa pitié généreuse et à sa tendresse infinie.

— Oui, mademoiselle, mon congé de convalescence expire dans huit jours. Je quitterai Pau demain, j'irai passer quelques jours en Touraine auprès de ma sœur, puis de là, je repartirai pour Brest, comme aide de camp du préfet maritime, et dans un an, dix-huit mois, je reprendrai la mer.

Ils étaient seuls dans un coin du salon de lecture de l'hôtel, debout près d'une fenêtre ouverte, devant le ciel de la nuit, où palpaient des milliers d'étoiles.

— Adieu donc et bon voyage, ré-

pondit Olga de sa voix franche et ferme. Mais j'ai quelque chose à vous demander, monsieur de Rhé... Oui, cette griffe de lion montée sur un petit cercle d'or, que vous portez en breloque... Eh bien, j'en ai envie... Cela vient d'un lion que vous avez tué dans une chasse, autrefois, en Afrique, n'est-ce pas?... Je suis une espèce de fauve, moi... Ce bibelot-là me convient... Donnez-le-moi; je le garderai en souvenir de vous.

Julien détacha la petite breloque et la mit dans la main de la jeune fille; mais soudain il prit cette main entre les siennes, et tout bas, ardemment:

— Je vous aime! lui dit-il. Voulez-vous devenir ma femme?

Olga dégagea doucement sa main, en gardant la griffe de lion; puis, croisant ses bras sur sa poitrine, elle regarda pendant un long moment M. de Rhé bien en face, sans émotion apparente.

— Non, dit-elle enfin, non!... Et pourtant vous êtes le premier qui m'aimez et qui me le dites de cette bonne façon-là. Mais c'est pour cela que je refuse...

— Olga! s'écria Julien d'une voix altérée.

— Ecoutez-moi, reprit-elle en l'interrompant d'un geste, et comprenez bien pourquoi je vous dis non... C'est que je ne me sens pas digne de vous et que je vous rendrais malheureux... Vous savez bien, cette lettre de votre sœur que vous vous plaigniez d'avoir perdue... Eh bien, c'est ici que vous l'avez laissée tomber, et je l'ai ramassée, et je l'ai lue... Votre sœur répondait à la confiance que vous lui aviez faite de vos sentiments pour moi... sentiments que j'ai devinés depuis longtemps... Elle s'en réjouissait en simple et vertueuse enfant qu'elle est, mais dans des termes qui m'ont fait comprendre quelle profonde, quelle effrayante différence existe entre une véritable jeune fille et moi!... En lisant cette lettre, pleine de détails intimes et touchants, j'ai vu aussi ce qu'était votre famille, vieille maison d'honnêtes gens, où vous ne devez faire entrer qu'une honnête femme...

Bénissez Dieu, monsieur de Rhé, d'avoir une mère en cheveux gris à qui vous ne pouvez penser sans sentir quelque chose de délicieusement doux qui se fond dans votre cœur... Moi aussi, j'ai une mère, moi aussi!... mais j'ai été forcée de la juger... Vous n'avez vu que ses ridicules, monsieur, mais je la connais mieux... Si vous lui demandiez ma main, elle vous la refuserait, parce que vous êtes de petite noblesse et que votre fortune est médiocre... Ma mère a décidé que je ne ferais qu'un grand mariage, ou sinon... sinon, elle me trouvera autre chose... Hein? j'ai de l'expérience, pour une fille de dix-neuf ans!... C'est horrible, n'est-ce pas? Mais c'est ainsi... Voilà pourquoi nous étions l'hiver dernier à Nice, l'été dernier à Schweningue, et pourquoi nous sommes maintenant à Pau! Voilà pourquoi nous roulons comme des colis d'un bout à l'autre de l'Europe, pourquoi nous ne couchons que dans les lits d'auberge et ne mangeons qu'à la table d'hôte. Ma mère a été presque princesse royale, vous comprenez, et elle m'a fait entendre dès l'âge de quinze ans que j'étais destinée à être au moins archiduchesse, fût-ce de la main gauche... Un mariage avec un petit gentilhomme, presque un bourgeois!... A ses yeux, je dérogerais. Ah! je dois vous inspirer le dégoût, et je me fais honte à moi-même! Ne protestez pas... Non, vous ne voudriez pas amener devant votre mère, comme votre fiancée, comme votre femme, celle à qui l'on a mis tant de boue dans le cœur... Et puis, je ne suis qu'un objet de luxe, coûteux et inutile, dont vous n'avez pas besoin, qui ne vous donnerait pas de bonheur... D'ailleurs, je ne vous aime point, je n'aime personne... L'amour, c'est dans les choses qu'on m'a défendues... Adieu, monsieur de Rhé, levez-vous et allez-vous-en sans me dire un mot je vous en conjure... Seulement, vous me laissez votre griffe de lion, n'est-ce pas? Elle me rappellera un honnête garçon envers qui j'ai agi en honnête fille... Ne me dites plus rien et quittons-nous pour toujours... Adieu.

Trois ans après, le transport à vapeur le *Du Couëdic*, revenant du Sénégal, venait de faire escale aux Canaries, pour prendre le courrier, et continuait son chemin, par une nuit de gros temps, lorsque le vaguemestre entra dans le carré des officiers et déposa sur la table un paquet de journaux.

Julien de Rhé déploya une feuille d'informations, venant de Paris et vieille de près de trois semaines, et il y lut, sous la rubrique: *Déplacements et villégiatures*, les lignes suivantes:

"S. M. le roi de Souabe, qui voyage, comme on le sait, dans le plus strict incognito, sous le nom de comte d'Augsbourg, est depuis hier soir dans nos murs.

"Un fâcheux incident s'est produit à la gare, au moment de l'arrivée du roi. La baronne de Hall qui, seule-

ment accompagnée de sa mère, la comtesse Babarine, avait fait le voyage avec Sa Majesté, a perdu un bijou de peu de valeur, mais auquel Mme de Hall attache, paraît-il, le plus grand prix. C'est une simple griffe de lion, montée sur un petit cercle d'or.

"Mme de Hall a promis deux mille francs de récompense à la personne qui lui rapporterait cet objet."

— Julien, prenez garde... Vous allez oublier l'heure de votre quart, mon cher ami.

— Merci, dit Julien de Rhé en jetant le journal et comme sortant d'un rêve.

Cette nuit-là, le timonier, qui était seul sur la passerelle avec l'officier de quart, vit celui-ci porter son mouchoir à son visage à plusieurs reprises, et pourtant, quoiqu'il y eût beaucoup de vent et de houle, l'embrun n'arrivait pas jusque-là.



IN THE GARDEN

"And he bought him a garden for his school."—*The Epicureana*.

IN the garden of my soul
Flowered the weeds of yesterday;
Broken faith and bitter dole,
Hope that hath not won the goal,
Flowered and faded slow away.

Ah! but in the soil beneath
Lie their scattered seeds to-day—
Shall they, bursting from the sheath
Like the fruit of dragons' teeth,
Flower and die and flower for aye?

In the garden of my soul
Bloomed the flowers of yesterday;
Joys that gladden and console,
Love with beauty's aureole,
Fade ye, too, in twilight gray?

Come, thou gardener, bent and wise,
Gird thee with exultant might;
Pluck the weed ere yet it dies,
Tend and trim the flowers I prize,
Wreath me garlands for the night.

DUFFIELD OSBORNE.

A WHISPERED WORD

DULL silence and a drear December day;
 Autumn's sweet dreams all covered with dry leaves;
 One lonely hawk on high the still air cleaves;
 The earth lies listless as my heart, and gray
 As the dead hopes that were so fair in May.
 Friends, nothing more, we watch the soaring bird.
 But, oh, you turn to me! You speak one word—
 Which I had never thought to hear you say.

It moves the silence, as a stone the lake,
 Until upon the farthest shores of space
 The rippling waves of gladness roll and break!
 One word! ah, God, it changes nature's face,
 The air is thrilled with meaning, earth's a-flame!
 Such magic in one word, one word—my name!

VENITA SEIBERT.



JUST SO

"HE has married and gone to live with his wife's parents."
 "Ah, I see! By securing a better half, he has made sure of better quarters."



"IN 1901, I read all the noted books of that year, and it took me just three months."
 "A week ago, I read the books of the same year that are still noted, and it took me just ten minutes."



BOUND TO BE

"HE is a confirmed woman-hater, isn't he?"
 "Sure! Been married three times."



LOVE may laugh at the locksmith, but never at the grocer.

THE BURGLAR

(A MORAL TALE)

By Rose K. Weekes

MISS MIRABELLE FANEAU, known in private life as Dolly Fane, fitted her latch-key into the door of her flat at eleven o'clock one cold December evening, and entered the hall. She was home unusually early, because an alarm of fire had interrupted the performance of the piece in which she was playing. Dolly was an actress; but, unlike most actresses, she studied economy. For this reason, she lived in a cheap flat in an unfashionable neighborhood, and dispensed with a maid; for this reason, also, she stumbled into a small snow-drift in the hall, the donation of a leaky skylight. When she had lighted the gas, and recovered her temper, she went into her bedroom to smooth her chestnut hair.

Not only did her commodious suite of apartments include a spacious hall, a cozy bed-chamber and the usual offices, but it had an elegant drawing-room as well. There Dolly dined; there she kept her savings; and she was naturally somewhat perturbed when the door, which she had just seen closed, gave a sudden and violent groan. Dolly put down her brush, and stepped out into the hall. The door stood ajar. A pleasurable thrill went over her; it was true that such mysterious portents had occurred before, and were to be ascribed to the shortcomings of the builder, but still there might be a burglar concealed behind the portal. Dolly decided that it was her duty to be nervous, and flung the door wide.

A young man was kneeling before the fire.

He looked at Dolly, and Dolly looked at him. Miss Fane experienced a peculiar sensation, which was certainly not terror; it was perilously like exhilaration. The burglar remained motionless. Dolly felt bound to act; she advanced into the room, and herself broke the silence.

"To what do I owe the honor of this intrusion?"

"Madame, to the coldness of the night," said the stranger, rising to his feet. He laid a revolver on the table, and then continued: "I escaped from the prison-van yesterday on my way to jail, and I have been hiding among the chimney-pots on your roof most of the time since. I thought you would not be home till late, so I climbed in by the skylight, and I have kept up your fire."

"How did you know my habits?" asked Dolly, warily, with her hand on the electric bell.

"Because I once had a flat here myself, and I remembered you."

"What were you accused of?"

"Forgery."

"I suppose you were innocent?"

"No, unfortunately," said the stranger; "I was guilty."

"Were you really?" said Dolly, and she took her hand off the bell, and came further into the room. The burglar was a personable young man, and had the address of a gentleman; his eyes were seductively blue, and he certainly looked chilly. Such considerations should not have influenced a right-minded young lady, but Dolly was, unfortunately, not that. "Sit down, please; if you came to get warm,

you may as well do so. Am I to take charge of this revolver?"

"As a guarantee of my harmless intentions," responded the burglar, sinking down among the cushions with an air of well-being.

"I know how to use it," said Dolly, with satisfaction.

"I thought you looked as though you did; you are evidently a young lady of character."

"I'm a very fair shot." Dolly leveled it correctly at the stranger's head. "I could certainly shoot you dead, if I chose."

"Do, if you like," said the stranger, politely; "only, pray let it not be by accident."

"Don't talk nonsense, please," said Dolly. "What is your name?"

"Henry Maxwell Wodehouse," said the stranger; "but do call me Max. Every one——"

"You were in, you say, for forgery. Had you ever forged before?"

"Never; it was my first offense. My uncle's Lord Colchester; haven't you seen the case in the papers?"

"I missed it, I suppose. Why did you forge?"

"I got into debt."

"How?"

"Backing horses," said the stranger, with *sang-froid*.

"What was your sentence?"

"Three years' imprisonment."

"How did you escape?"

"The front wheel came off as the van turned a corner, the driver was pitched off, the warder inside got a crack on the head, a crowd gathered, and I made myself scarce amid the confusion."

"And found your way here?"

"And found my way here," said the stranger. "You see, I knew the ropes."

Dolly had finished her catechism, and was tolerably well satisfied. She had a mighty contempt for crimes done for money's sake and at the behest of circumstances, and, if the burglar had professed himself a martyr, she would at once have rung the bell, and delivered him up to the majesty of the

law, which was generally to be found holding converse with the basement. But the burglar's admission of guilt was a passport to her assistance. Dolly's morality was perverted, but it was quite definite; she held Spartan ideas on the subject of picking and stealing. She knew her own mind very well indeed, and was not troubled with diffidences or hesitations.

She laid the table, brought a cold beefsteak pie from the larder, a decanter of wine from the sideboard, and added a serviette as a last refinement. When she passed her writing-table, she actually forgot that her savings were locked up there and that her guest was a thief. He, meanwhile, watched her preparations in silence, and his face was a battleground of emotions.

When she had finished, "Are you going to give me supper?" he exclaimed.

"I am; please sit down."

"I don't want anything, thank you," said he, in a low voice.

"I do," said Dolly. "I am inviting you to share my meal."

"I'd rather go back to the roof."

"Well, you're certainly polite."

"I don't think you're fit to sit down with a forger," he hastened to explain. "At least——"

"Lucid, very," Dolly remarked.

"I mean, a forger isn't fit to sit down with you. You turn all my ideas topsy-turvy, so what can you expect of my words?"

"I commend your scruples," said Dolly, severely, "but I don't respect your sense."

"Well, I haven't any objection, if you haven't," said the guest, and he burst out laughing. "You make me feel quite virtuous."

"That must be a strange sensation."

"It is, rather," he agreed, drawing up his chair; "but it makes me in sympathy with you, so you may be sure it is delightful."

They began their meal. The burglar's conversation was most persuasive, and Dolly was little surprised

to find that he talked with great fluency and facility on many subjects; but she was surprised to discover that, so far as her experience served her, he was accurate. And he, once he had made up his mind to accept her hospitality, did not look back or forward, but devoted himself to the task of entertaining his hostess with the best of his powers.

The meal over, Dolly cleared the cloth, and carried the used dishes into the kitchen, where she filled a bowl with hot water, rolled her sleeves to her elbows, and began to wash the utensils. The sight of her bared arms, beautiful in their immaculate whiteness and yet so strong, of the wet crockery and of the surging water, roused in her guest a spirit of emulation; and, as she deftly washed, he dried the dishes upon a soft, white cloth. Very awkward was he at the task, moreover.

"Hold the plate in your left hand and the cloth in your right, rubbing under and over, so," said Dolly, taking it from his fingers to illustrate her meaning; and, as she did so, their hands touched, and the guest looked down at his own as though to see what metamorphosis the contact wrought.

"Where did you learn to be so charmingly clever?" he inquired.

"At home. I was born in a Yorkshire farm-house, and I served for my father and brothers till I was twenty."

"You don't mean to say they let you slave for them! The barbarians!"

"Well, yes, we were barbarians," said Dolly, rubbing away at her fork. "Many's the time we've gone poaching together; that's where I learned to handle a gun. And many's the clout on the ear I've had, like Alfred, for letting the cakes burn, when I was reading. Women are women with us, not dolls in glass cases. My hands will show that I've worked."

She extended a rosy, soft palm, crinkled and puffed by the hot water. There was but one thing for the stranger to do, according to his lights,

and he did it, gallantly. There was but one thing for Dolly to do, according to hers, and she also performed her duty; adding, succinctly, "Don't be a fool!"

"But why, if you enjoyed having your ears boxed, did you ever leave your native dales?" asked the stranger, ruefully rubbing his own ears; for Dolly was thorough in all she did.

"I ran away to come to town because I wanted power."

The stranger surveyed her, curiously, and with appreciation. The warmth of her young life enriched the curves of her damask cheeks, her eyes sparkled like brown diamonds, her throat in its full roundness was perfect as that of the Venus of the Louvre. Her vital beauty glowed like a jewel in the shabby room. "And have you found it?" he asked.

"Not yet."

"How do you mean to win it?"

"By money, and beauty, and wits," said Dolly, concisely. She stripped off her apron, pulled down her sleeves, and fastened the links at the wrists; and the stranger watched the disappearance of her arms with a regretful sigh.

"Money, beauty, wits; why put them in that impolite order?" he asked, following her into the drawing-room.

"Because it's their order of merit. That is why I live here alone; I am saving my money with a purpose."

"It's a poor look-out for me, if I've only my wits to depend on."

"I dare say you'll do pretty well," said Dolly, just turning her head to give him a patronizing glance, "after you've served your term; for, of course, you will certainly be recaptured. Ambition would be hardly in your line."

"I beg your pardon. I cannot bear to contradict a lady, but I must protest."

"Are you really ambitious?" asked Dolly, now turning completely around. "Then, I think better of you than I did."

"Did you despise me?"

"Rather. Yours is such a milk-and-watery sort of story."

"Then why did you take me in?"

"Because you told the truth. It was your one merit."

The stranger's lips parted eagerly to speak, and shut again in exasperated silence. He looked as though his excuse had suddenly been spirited away from his tongue.

"You are certainly less commonplace than I thought," Dolly pursued, "since you are ambitious. But your ambition couldn't have been worth much, since you threw away your chances for a paltry bet."

"You appear to consider that ambition is the cardinal virtue!"

"Not in the least; only that weakness is the cardinal sin."

"I'm sure I wish I'd never heard of my wretched uncle!" groaned the culprit, with evident sincerity. "I wish I'd never saddled myself with that forgery!"

"You do? That makes your case all the worse."

"Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it may."

You should count the cost, and make up your mind first; not abandon your resolve for the first scruple or terror. I do despise a wavering purpose."

"But hang it all! I was committing a crime!"

"Oh, a crime will do

"As well, I reply, to serve for a test,"

quoted Dolly. "I'd far rather be a whole-hearted sinner than a half-hearted saint."

The stranger passed his hand wearily across his brow. "And what about repentance?"

"Repentance," said Dolly, "is most often a lively sense of judgment to come. I prefer steadfastness, myself."

"Then you'd advise me to stick to my purpose, whatever it be, through thick and thin?"

"Certainly I do."

"Very well. I don't know where your immoral morality will lead me,"

said the stranger. "On your head be it if I take your advice."

"Do, and I'll change my opinion of you!"

"You still think me contemptible?"

"On your own confession, you've not been steadfast, hitherto."

The stranger gave her another glance, compounded of chagrin, frustration and unwilling amusement.

"I'll explain all that some day," he said, deprecatingly.

"Perhaps you did it to screen a friend!" suggested Dolly, with such kind solicitude that she drove her guest almost to profanity. He got up out of his chair.

"I think I'll wish you good night, Miss Fane, and go back to the roof."

"You may wish me good night, but you won't go back to the roof."

"Are you going to deliver me up to the police?"

"After sharing a meal with you? What strange ideas of hospitality you civilized Londoners have! In Yorkshire, the barbarians don't do so. You will sleep in this room. To-morrow, I'll get you some second-hand clothes, and make up your face so that your mother wouldn't know you; then, you may go, but not before."

"You're too kind."

"Not in the least. It's a reward to you for telling the truth."

Her guest writhed afresh, and Dolly wondered what sting lay in her words; but she was not disposed to spare him.

"You know I can't stay here. It's impossible, on your account."

"Scandal? I don't care for it."

"Well, I do; and I won't stay."

"Then I shall ring for the policeman."

"Do, by all means." Dolly put her hand on the bell. "Oh, no, by Jove! I simply can't stand that. Don't ring. I'll stay."

The hapless burglar again swept his hand across his perturbed brow. Dolly took her hand away. She had not meant to ring; she had merely given him a chance of vindicating his character. This was too much.

"You may sleep on the sofa," she

said, her voice edged with righteous contempt. "I don't know whether you expect me to believe in the strength of your character *still?*"

"I'll explain—" cried the stranger, but he was explaining to the air. Dolly had gone, and had locked the door behind her. The stranger stood and gazed at that noble deal portal until a slow smile dawned, and he went thoughtfully back to his chair.

"After all," he said, "this will teach her a moral lesson."

Dolly rose, as usual, next morning at seven, lighted her kitchen fire, and cooked the breakfast. She did not sweep the dining-room, having a natural delicacy about disturbing her guest; but, punctually, when the clock struck half-past eight, she knocked at the door, at first formally, then vigorously. She got no answer. Dolly marveled at the soundness of his slumber, fetched the kitchen poker, and raised a lively tattoo which chipped the paint off the panels, but elicited no answering voice. The mistress of the flat, who wanted her breakfast, then unlocked the door, and went boldly in.

The room was empty.

Dolly came near to dropping the breakfast-tray. Where and how had he gone? She ran to the window, and looked down seven stories into the street, but no mangled corpse decorated the area railings; and Dolly felt sure that, even though she had

misjudged him in this last instance, he was not sufficiently angelic to receive a miraculous gift of wings. She turned back, and saw, prominently set on the table, a note addressed to herself. It was written on her note-paper, which she kept locked in her escritoire; yet, even then, she had no suspicion of the truth.

DEAR MISS FANE:

I am not a forger. I never escaped from a prison-van. I have no uncle, except that one who is a little less than kin and more than kind. I have by now sojourned on your roof, it is true, though I had never done so when first we met. But it is true that—till to-day—I had a flat in this house; and, though you may not have noticed me, I have long noticed and admired you, especially your economy. I am a gentleman of shady antecedents and yet blacker debts, and I took advantage of your absent evening to make a burglarious entry into your flat with a false key, on purpose to relieve you of your savings. You caught me red-handed. I invented a story which, I calculated, would incline you to mercy. It did so; you were angelic. Alas! I weakly repented of my purpose; the reason, your mirror will tell you plainly, if such a word may be used in such a context. But you have shown me my duty. "A crime will do as well, I reply, to serve for a text." To vindicate my character, I regret to say that I have been forced to break open your cash-box and appropriate its contents. I know you will not think me ungrateful; reluctant though I was, what could I do but follow your counsel? You will rejoice to know that I am not vacillating, for weakness is, is it not, the cardinal sin?

The Honorable Henry Maxwell Wodehouse is, I believe, Clerk to the House of Commons. It is really a pity that you do not read the papers.

Will you prosecute me when I come back?



THE COMPANY HE KEEPS

NODD—What explanation are you going to make to your wife?

TODD—It won't be necessary to make any. She knows I'm with you.



HE—I am almost afraid to make love to you, for fear I don't know how.

SHE—Have no fear! I've taught many a better man than you.

RONDEL

LOVE hath querulous grown and sad—
 We should have parted yesterday;
 A wistful lass and a tender lad—
 Pity it were we chose to stay.

Over-long was the joy we had—
 Why we wearied what man may say?
 Love hath querulous grown and sad—
 We should have parted yesterday.

Oh, to have said, when hearts were glad,
 "Kiss me and go," as lovers may.
 Now we sneer that the dream was mad,
 Yawn and wonder and turn away.
 Love hath querulous grown and sad—
 We should have parted yesterday.

HELEN SCOTT.



INGRATITUDE

THE great boss, alone and now forgotten, stood once again in the streets of the metropolis that had been the scene of his endeavors. No one recognized him. No one spoke to him. The crowd passed on, indifferent to his presence.

A tear glistened in his eye. "Well!" he exclaimed, sadly, "I'll never rob another city!"



NOT NECESSARY

FIRST BUNCO MAN—What are you up to? Working some new game?

SECOND BUNCO MAN—Don't have to. None of the old games is played out yet.



FIRST MAN—Isn't that short lady over there your wife?

SECOND MAN—I really can't say—the divorce decision hasn't been given yet.

THE BLUE THORN OF KASHGAR

By Edward Boltwood

STARTLED by his word of annoyance, Madelon Wroxeter leaned to one side, the better to observe her husband across the narrow circle of damask where the trio sat at dinner. A scarlet lamp beamed dully over the table, and in its light Mrs. Wroxeter's attitude revealed a curving line of perfect beauty between her neck and shoulders. Ellis Drake thought he had been surfeited by the girl's perfections, but he noted the line with shameless eagerness.

"What in the world has happened, David?" said she.

"A sharp corner in the rim of the claret glass, dear." Wroxeter pressed a *serviette* to his mouth. "I nicked my clumsy lip. You have allowed our tableware to suffer during my absence from civilization. 'He who leaves his home unlocked will find his wine running, his dishes broke, his women—' It is an Arabian proverb of great wisdom. I sha'n't finish it."

Drake laughed, readily, but Mrs. Wroxeter's eyebrows drew together in a charming frown.

"*Hélas!* ever your Arabians!" she sighed, in her pretty French-English. "Jealousy, you see, David," commented Drake, smiling.

Wroxeter nodded, and adjusted his spectacles. Newspaper artists found the famous explorer a poor subject. He was a slight, dark man, with a sparse and grizzled beard. Only at the third or fourth glance might one catch the wiry energy in his grave face.

"Anything so unpleasant as jealousy is out of place here, Madelon," he said, sententiously. "Is it not the night of my home-coming to New York,

and to my beautiful young wife, and to my trusted friend? That is an occasion, I fancy. I pledge you." He raised his glass, but set it down untasted. "My lip smarts like fire. In Turkestan, one might be poisoned so."

Drake was courteously interested.

"Oh, a cup with a barb to prick your tongue is a familiar trick," went on Wroxeter. "The blue thorn of Kashgar would have done my business here, swiftly and certainly. In a minute, I'd be twisted and burning on the carpet. I saw a man die of the blue thorn at Fort Yaryn. When he was dead, he was like a black, swollen hoop; he——"

"David!" Mrs. Wroxeter shuddered, appealingly.

"No, it is not a nice anecdote," he admitted. "Quebec pleased you last Autumn, did it not, Ellis? Madelon tells me that you were there while she was revisiting madame, her mother. Now, the tobacco, Miffin."

Cigars were offered by the old butler, gray in his master's service, and over the boxes Drake hesitated silently before replying. To his relief, however, Mrs. Wroxeter took up the conversation.

Drake leaned back in his chair, amused at her ingenuousness. Apparently, she was as naïve as if she were ignorant of the passion in the heart of her husband's friend, as if Drake had not sent her that mad letter a few days since, in which his love had broken the bonds of his calculating discretion for the first and only time. His note was in no way acknowledged, neither was it reproved. To-night, her manner convinced Drake that he must win.

"Let us go to the library," said Wroxeter, rising.

"But surely an intruder—at this reunion—" protested Drake.

"Not a bit of it!" Wroxeter slipped one brown hand within Drake's elbow, and laid the other on his wife's exquisite shoulder. "The library, by all means."

The room had once been a studio; two years ago, it was full of left-over artists' trappery when Wroxeter brought to the house the wife whom he had taken, in his middle-age, from the Canadian convent school. Here, among the pictures, Drake had met her—herself, he thought, the very picture of a growing flower.

Wroxeter turned out the gay canvases, and made the cavernous apartment as somber as a vault. Dusky tapestries shrouded the walls, and throttled the windows. Among them peered the mounted heads of monstrous beasts; a hideous idol brooded malevolently in one corner; in another grinned the effigy of an ancient Chinese executioner in his red-and-yellow armor. Ranged above the low book-cases, gleamed the celebrated Wroxeter fighting knives. The collection was reputed priceless—poniard, creese and yataghan, assagai and dirk, bowie, claymore and machete. The single green-shaded lamp glimmered on an enormous table, littered with charts and documents. In front of the blinking coals in the grate, a divan was covered with lustrous bearskin. Drake sat beside Madelon; Wroxeter leaned idly against the repulsive figure-head of an African war-canoe, flanking the fireplace.

To Drake, the sight of the girl's tender beauty in this room was always a fantasy of the incongruous. And typical of her incongruous marriage? The comparison occurred to Drake's mind as he bent forward and warmed his hands thoughtfully over Wroxeter's hearthstone.

In the meantime, Madelon had insisted that David must be made to tell of all his wanderings. Wroxeter was a graceless talker, with neither humor

nor imagination. When there was a logical halt in the narrative, Drake rose to go.

"Incidentally, my pet collection has been favored." The traveler indicated an oblong packet on the table. "There is a rarity, I believe, sent me by a border chieftain in Aksu. I haven't opened it yet."

Drake remained while Wroxeter unwound the wrappings, pungent with the mysterious aroma of the Orient. A broad dagger was disclosed. The blade was clouded with a gossamer device of curling dragons, and the heavy hilt was carved ivory, yellowed by age. Madelon touched the metal with a venturesome finger.

"What is it called?" she asked.

Wroxeter caressed the hilt in his palm. "The name can't be translated politely," he said. "'Love knife,' perhaps, will serve."

"Love knife?" repeated Madelon, wide-eyed.

"Yes. They come usually in pairs, like dueling pistols. One you give to your adversary, and with the other—"

"An affectionate title for such a weapon," said Drake, preparing to roll a cigarette. "'Love' seems hardly appropriate."

"Why not? In Turkestan, the duello is rare, except when two men love the same woman. A satisfactory blow, like this—"

Drake looked up from the trembling cigarette-paper. The dagger was on the floor, and Wroxeter, smiling uncertainly, was gripping the ball of his thumb with his other hand.

"I'm in the line of accidents this evening," he said; "scratched myself again, somehow."

"On this, David?" Madelon picked up the knife, and carried it to the lamp. "Oh, the villainy!" she gasped.

The men crossed to the table where she had dropped the weapon. From the upper end of the hilt now protruded a needle, less than an inch long, bluish in tint. With a smothered oath, the explorer retreated into the shadow.

"What's that point there?" blurted

Drake, breathlessly. "What is it?—that point. Not the—the—?"

"The blue Kashgar thorn. Damnation, yes!"

His wife and his friend sought Wroxeter's countenance, inscrutable in the darkness. For an instant, the three were statues. The fall of pallor on Madelon's cheeks was like snow on roses. "*Ciel!* it frightens me!" she murmured.

"Don't be concerned, child," said Wroxeter, but with the faintest quiver of an alarm. "To draw out any poison there, is simple." And he put the hand to his mouth.

Drake caught his forearm. "Remember the broken wine-glass—the skin is cut."

"By God! that's so! Thank you, Ellis." Wroxeter's mechanical laugh grated, and he took a fresh grip on his wrist. "The devil is in the mess. I wonder—well, I must ask your help, my friend." He laughed again, more softly than before.

In Drake's fingers, the futile tissue-paper still fluttered, as he folded and refolded it, corner to corner. Wroxeter wrinkled his forehead, perplexed.

"I must ask your help, Ellis," he echoed.

"My part is to help—mine!" cried Madelon, springing forward.

"We cannot well allow you to risk it, can we, Drake? Come, make haste!"

Drake tried hard to reason; his brain simmered, uncontrollably. He moistened his dry lips, and shifted his gaze to the leering image in the corner, missing the dawn of horror and amazement on the white face of Madelon.

"We must send for a doctor," said Drake, thickly, as if to the idol. "Of course, there is no danger, David. This is New York—not an Asian desert."

"Ah, yes," rejoined Wroxeter, in a voice of silk. "A stray savage in the desert would suck this wound, unless——"

Drake made a vague gesture of protest.

"Unless," pursued the other, "he wished to make a widow. Madelon, I

beg—" for his wife was on her knees, fighting her sobs bravely, reaching for his hand. Wroxeter held it aloft.

"Your admirable caution suggests a doctor, Drake," said he. "Averill is clever, and close by. If you will be so kind."

"I don't want you to think I—" stammered Drake. "I want you to know——"

"I do. Time presses."

Moving stiffly, after the fashion of an automaton, the younger man hurried to the telephone in the hall. Averill promised speed, and Drake clicked the receiver to its place, turning slowly on his heel. His glance fell on the closed door of the library, and hung there, singularly fascinated. From minute to minute, the grim, black panels became potential, tragic, terrible. He fumbled at the knob, and reeled once, drunkenly. Watching the sinister door, he sidled to the stair-head, and called for Mifflin. There was no response, but the sound of his own speech nerved him; he reentered the library. Wroxeter stood on the hearth-rug with arms folded, facing the entrance.

"You did not hurry, Ellis," he complained.

Drake leaned heavily against the table. Wroxeter broke into a queer chuckle, and darted to the lamp, thrusting his hand under its rays.

"Behold!" he said. "I find that I have not been injured. Do you see? I made a mistake. The thorn didn't bite me in the least. Do you see? Eh?"

"You are not hurt? You are not—?" Drake straightened himself, and brought his fist down on the desk. "Then, what was all this precious nonsense?" he demanded, sullenly; "a joke?" He pulled up his shoulders. "Your humor is delicate."

"Well, that is as it may be," retorted Wroxeter. "My humor is my own. So, if you will allow the conceit, is my wife. Madelon!"

She advanced out of the gloom into the ring of light. Drake could not meet her blazing eyes.

"You have the base and evil heart of a coward," said she.

"A coward!" Drake's shrill voice belied his defiant swagger. "Oh, you mean David's tomfoolery with the dagger? Have you only now seen the trick? Somewhat stupid and crude, but——"

"I mean that—and this." She flung a letter at his feet.

"Well, there it is for you, Ellis Drake," Wroxeter drawled. "Mifflin intercepted the sweet composition, and gave it to me unopened. He is a faithful soul, with some knowledge of men and women. I have just read the letter to Madelon. She and I know you now for the first time. The little epi-

sode of my prearranged poison was an effective prelude to our knowledge, as the event proves. And what do you say?"

"I say that you chose to insult me in your own house," Drake snarled.

"That is soon remedied," laughed Wroxeter, drily. "I hear the bell of the street door. It is Averill, I dare say, who possibly will be glad to drive you home. Before we terminate our acquaintance, Drake, do me this last service—pray make my apologies to the doctor. Shall I ring for my butler to escort you to the carriage? No? Perhaps you are right. You have been always considerate, my dear friend."



CHANSON BRETONNE

JE NAQUIS, je vécus sur la lande bretonne,
Où la mer m'envoyait sa plainte monotone.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

J'aimais les vieux rochers, les mouettes, la grève,
L'Océan qui mugit aux falaises sans trêve.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

Je filais, je chantais un air joyeux ou triste;
Je dansais au biniou à l'âge où rien n'attriste.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

Un jour de mes pensers je rencontrai l'idole;
L'idole était d'argile et son cœur sans parole.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenirs des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

J'allai dans la nuit sombre, errante et délaissée,
Et mon âme mourut de s'être ainsi trompée.
Tombeau des souvenirs, que recèlerez-vous?
Souvenir des tombeaux, que raconterez-vous?

DUCHESSE DE ROHAN.



DON'T borrow trouble; if it comes, you'll own it.

THE DAY FAIRFAX RETURNED

By Robert C. V. Meyers

WHEN Fairfax went aboard ship for the homeward passage, he would have said that he was entirely cured of the nonsense which had sent him from his native soil a year and a half before. The second day at sea, he began to think of America and the changes he might expect to find there. The third day, he thought of Henrietta Dale. It was she who had sent him abroad. He would have said that she was cruel and heartless; that his affection for her had been mere calf-love, begun on the athletic field where he had done marvels as a half-back, to whom she had thrown a bunch of violets worn close to her heart a few minutes before. Several other girls had thrown their violets at his feet, but only Henrietta's appealed to him.

After the violets came the introduction through Emily Baily, Cousin Jack's wife. Then came the friendship, and at last the avowal which she repulsed. After that, he left college and the country, and now, a year and a half later, he was going back to enter upon a strenuous life of business with his father, thankful that he had not gone in for law, as he had thought to do before he had been so badly treated by a heartless woman.

Pshaw! why should he think of her? It must be because of the possibility of meeting her soon again. No, he would think only of his father, who had agreed to the long absence without asking for a single word of explanation. As for that, though, his father must have known everything, for Emily Baily was the intimate of Henrietta Dale, and called his father

her "confessor," to whom she told all her woes. At any rate, the *pater* had been kind, and even now did not insist on his son's return, only intimating that he considered twenty-four a very fitting age for a young man to enter upon the affairs of the world. Yes, he would go home, and do wonders in business; he was tired of trapesing about; he was tired of nonsense; now he would go in and win his spurs.

The fourth day out, there was a big storm, a heavy sea was shipped, and a sailor tangled in the cordage was swept away. Fairfax plunged into the raging waters. It was a long time before those on deck saw him rise on the crest of a wave, nearly exhausted, the unconscious sailor on one arm. They dragged the two up. Fairfax heard the crew and passengers cheering, and thought they complimented him on his ability as a swimmer; he did not think their praise could be for any heroism on his part.

When the ship entered calm waters, and the pilot came aboard, Fairfax frowned when the rescued sailor was mentioned to him; he had had a surfeit of the thing from the passengers. The first familiar face he saw, as he went down the gang-plank to *terra firma*, was that of his father.

"So," said the elder man, "you have been going about saving people's lives? A reporter has just told me."

Fairfax laughed and shook his father by the hand, and they went along in the cab toward the old home. At the door of the house, his father left and took his way down-town.

Fairfax entered the house, and went up to his room. Nothing was changed;

everything was as he had left it when he went away. Had his mother been alive, this might have been expected, but for a man of his father's busy habits so to care for his boy's fripperies of furbishings appealed strongly to the young fellow. What a good father his was, and how he had neglected him—first, in the college days when his classmates took up every minute of time, and afterward by this year and a half of absence. But, now, he would do all he could to make up for his long period of neglect.

He sauntered up to the mantelpiece. Above a framed photograph of himself, in all the shapeless toggery of the football field, was a brown mass of what had once been a bunch of violets, still tied with a scarlet ribbon.

He had neglected to destroy them when he had gone abroad. He flushed as he tore them down and tossed them into a waste-paper basket. A maid in attending to the room would burn the trash.

He looked at his watch, and found that it was but three o'clock. The rules of the house seldom varied, so he would not see his father until the seven-o'clock dinner.

Somehow, he did not feel like going out; his room had a strange fascination for him after his long experience with foreign hotels. He settled himself in the soft, padded arm-chair, and spread his feet toward the fireless grate. Tomorrow, he would begin work. What a fool he had been to absent himself so long from the interests of his native land, letting other fellows gain such enviable places in the race for success! However, had he not been forced away by his disappointment, he might now be plodding over law books, preparatory to entering a field for which he had no calling, and eventually becoming a second- or third-rate attorney for the rest of his life. No; activity was the thing—business activity; his many months of loitering made him see things as they should be seen.

Again, he pulled out his watch. Only half-past three! He would go

for a stroll, and call on Jack Baily. Jack had been a good fellow in the old time; he had heard, through his wife, all about the trouble over Henrietta Dale, and never said a word. But Jack, bulling and bearing the market, would be busy, and ought not to be interrupted by merely a social visit.

He wondered if Emily were well, and Toodlems, the youngest child, who had always been convulsively cutting teeth. Then, he remembered how angry Emily had been over Henrietta's treatment of him; how she had sent for him to come to her pretty apartment; had taken his hand in hers, and said, "Don't mind more than you can help, Billy. Henrietta has behaved hatefully. It is all her advanced and unsentimental ideas, thinking that men should be of account in the world." Every word had been a stab; but Emily had meant well, and it had been she who presented him to Henrietta. Henrietta! He was thinking of her again, and all this time his eyes had been on the waste-paper basket where were the ruined violets of long ago! Bah! Henrietta Dale was nothing to him—absolutely nothing.

A clock somewhere in the house struck four. He would go and see Jack.

When he reached the office, his cousin waved a welcoming hand toward him—holding an important conversation over the telephone with a railway magnate, at the same time.

"Glad to see you, old man!" said Jack. "Yes," to the telephone, "jump two points to-morrow. Between boards? All right; certainly. Well, old man, I'm simply delighted. Yes, I said two points. Certainly, I will, if you say so. Seventy, not eighty, only two points."

"Perhaps I'd better drop in another time," said Fairfax. "I only wanted to ask after Emily."

"All right," responded Jack, his ear still glued to the receiver. "And the kid, too. He's done cutting teeth. Now, it's measles. Don't hurry because—yes, yes, or a point and a half if——"

"I fear you're busy," ventured Fairfax.

"Not at all," returned Bailly. "I—eighty, and not a stroke more. Going, old man? I'll tell Emily. Come to dinner to-night. Seven o'clock."

"Can't," Fairfax replied, shortly. "It's my first night home. I shall dine with my father." But he doubted if Jack heard him. He left the office, feeling hurt. The world was terribly selfish; he wanted no more of it just then. He hastened home in the early dusk.

A half-hour later Jack Bailly went down to the automobile in which his wife had called for him, and dismissed the chauffeur, for he dearly loved to make himself a part of the new centaur. He told her of Fairfax's call and the invitation to dinner.

"I hope he'll come," she said; "I'd like to tell him how Henrietta has gone off in looks."

"Has she?" Bailly asked.

"You know she is not nearly so cheerful as she used to be," his wife returned. "And, if a woman who is not absolutely a howling beauty is not cheerful, she goes off in looks. Look out! You frightened that horse with your steam whistle. Of course, you told him we are at the hotel?"

"Very likely," he answered, moderating his whistle to the susceptibilities of a woman crossing the street. "At any rate, his father will tell him. Emily, old Rocks, the president of the H. R. R., is in the new deal, and wants to raise two points——"

"Jack," she interrupted, "I got the loveliest white-velvet coat for Toodles you ever saw."

At the same moment, Fairfax was in his room, his eyes on the dark grate. It seemed pretty hard to him, this coming home—his father too busy to do more than shake hands with him, his cousin too busy even to shake hands. What a busy world it was! He seemed the only idler.

He wondered where were all his college chums. Most of them had been graduated in June of last year, and

were scattered, very likely forgetting him. And he the favorite half-back of the year! He wondered if he could play a game now—so many changes creep into the rules of the game each year. But what sport it used to be—especially that Thanksgiving game, when the girls threw their flowers to him! How beautiful Henrietta had looked that day! After he knew her, how lovely she— But that was over, well over, and her rejection of his suit had made him see things in their true light. Yet, he wondered who her cavaliers were now.

He rose and walked about the room. He caught sight of the waste-paper basket, the faded violets in it. He gave it a savage kick, and it rolled partly under the bed. He cared absolutely nothing for Henrietta Dale, yet this coming home brought everything before him.

Just then, a knock sounded on the door. Of course, it must be his father, coming home early in order to talk with him. Instead, it was the butler; his father wished to speak to him over the telephone.

Fairfax went down to the library, and heard that his father must attend an improvised board meeting, and would not be home until ten o'clock. Fairfax picked up a book, but he could not read. A pretty home-coming, indeed! Stay here and dine alone? Never! He would accept Jack Bailly's invitation, and let Emily see that he had got over all that nonsense of long ago. Why had he not thought of that before? Naturally, she must have asked Jack how he looked, and if his eyes were "sad."

He hurried into his evening coat. As he was leaving the room, something touched his foot. In dressing, he had angrily tramped around the floor, and set the discarded round waste-paper basket in motion, for it had rolled from under the bed, emptying out the bunch of dead violets.

He grasped the faded blossoms in a veritable fury, and crushed them in his coat-pocket, determining to toss them in the cartway outside.

He had to make haste to catch his car. All the way to Jack's, he was at white heat. When he reached the apartment, he called himself to order. Emily must not see him like this—he must be cool and calm.

When he felt that he was equal to it, he entered the yawning portal of the huge, brown palace. The elevator took him heavenward. When he stepped out, he steered for a door where stood a white-gloved servant. Beyond, he caught a glimpse of several people. So, Emily was having a dinner-party! He would have gone away, but he feared the servant might report his having been there, and Emily would comment. He handed the man his hat and top-coat, and plunged into the room, with a smiling visage. Then, he came to a standstill, for the first person he saw was Henrietta Dale. She was talking to another woman, but her eyes caught his, and the next moment she had turned to her companion. Then, a voice sounded in his ear:

"How good of you, Mr. Fairfax. We have read all about you in this evening's paper, and how you saved that sailor from drowning. How good of you to come to us thus informally." It was Henrietta's mother.

Fairfax gave his hand, mechanically. "Henrietta!" said Mrs. Dale, and the girl came up.

"Welcome home!" she said, in a constrained voice. "We have heard of nothing but your saving the sailor, since the evening papers came out. Will you take in Mrs. Enderly?"

Fairfax was dumfounded; he was in his cousin's home, and yet neither Jack nor Emily was to be seen, while a dinner-party was on.

But he had no time to do other than offer his arm to Mrs. Enderly, and join the procession that led to the dining-room. Seated at the table, his bewilderment increased. He was in Jack Baily's dining-room, he recognized the furnishings, and yet he was an uninvited guest at a dinner given by the mother of Henrietta Dale, the girl who had discarded him, whose re-

jection had sent him from his home a year and a half ago.

Mrs. Enderly spoke to him. "We have read about your saving the sailor," she said; "it was wonderfully brave of you."

"I must introduce myself, Mr. Fairfax," a man said, across the table. "It seems your saving the sailor has been the talk of the club since the papers came out."

Fairfax wished he had been drowned in saving that sailor!

"And your cousin, Emily Baily"—Mrs. Enderly interrupted his agony—"have you seen her?"

"No," he answered.

"She will not be here," the lady pursued. "She hardly felt equal to it; Toodlems was so on her mind. Fancy a woman renting this lovely apartment, and going to live in a hotel, simply that she might devote herself to a baby with a temper, for Toodlems is the crossdest little monkey I ever came across."

The truth dawned on him. Emily had rented her apartment to the Dales, and he stood in the light of an interloper. What must Henrietta be thinking? But he had to talk, and he had to eat, and he had to endure the torture of sitting there, the involuntary guest of the woman who had rejected him.

He did not look in her direction; he did not wish to see the scornful expression of her eyes; he only waited for the dinner to come to an end, when he might get away and—do what?—return to Europe at once?

He sat thus an hour and more. Then, Mrs. Dale arose. But, when the ladies had passed from the room, Fairfax made his way into the hall, where he encountered Henrietta. The others had passed into the drawing-room. The girl's eyes met his own.

"Henrietta, I thought Jack lived here."

He had not meant to utter her name; but he came upon her so unexpectedly, she looked so sweet, even helpless, as she turned her misty eyes to him!

"You forgive me," she said. "Your coming here tells me as much. I think we shall be good friends again. It was so brave of you to come. People have criticized me for—for that time, and your coming disarms their criticism. I—that time, I might have been kinder, but you seemed to me to be frittering your best days away. Emily Baily told me you were coming back to go into business with your father, and I am glad, for your sake. And your bravery in saving that sailor! Mr. Fairfax"—she held out her hand—"I am glad that I did as I did, for I have discovered that you are a brave man, indeed, in staying through the dinner which you must have attended

by mistake, for in this way you have shielded me from my friends. And I thank you for your friendship."

Perhaps, his heart beat tumultuously, for he put his hand up over his coat-pocket. There, he felt a lump of something. He took out the faded, crushed violets.

"I meant to destroy these," he said; "I believe I could not." She gave a little cry as she saw the flowers tied with the scarlet ribbon.

She took his hand. Tears were in her eyes. "You kept them?" she asked.

"I—I'm glad Jack *doesn't* live here!" he said, his cup of joy brimming over. "Henrietta!"

And she leaned toward him.



AN ANCIENT TRUTH

OLD Cræsus has a lowering brow,
A mouth of wide dimension,
A brain where one may seek in vain
For gleams of comprehension.

Yet, when you hear of him each night
With fond mamas a-dining,
You realize how much a cloud
May owe its silver lining!

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



THE OLD CODGER'S INHUMANITY

THE Old Codger's rheumatism had kept him penned up in the house for several weary days, and he was in a state of hectic savagery when poor, paltry Neighbor Akinside—who was a prey to dyspepsia, and a still worse disease, the belief that everybody else was interested in his ailment—crept meekly in.

The visitor inquired after the old gentleman's health, and the veteran was in duty bound to return the compliment by asking about the other's malady. Having thus had the trigger of his loquacity properly pulled, Neighbor Akinside recited, with chastened relish and loving lingering over the details, how he had acquired his ailment, what torments he had suffered from it, what various sympathetic Toms, Dicks and Harrys had said about it, how Dr. Thus-and-so and old Dr. What's-his-name had diagnosed it, what various physicians, friends, enemies, chance acquaintances, and so-forths had prescribed for it, how little

good all such prescriptions had done him, and so on, with the solemn persistence of a Winter rain falling on an orphan girl's grave.

"About a year ago," he proceeded, with keen, but apologetic, enjoyment, "I met a gentleman who was afflicted almost exactly as I am. No matter how careful he was about eating he always suffered excruciating agony afterward. None of the remedies he tried gave him more than the merest temporary relief, and, when I saw him, he was indeed in a pitiable condition. We both enjoyed the meeting very much, and were greatly edified by each other's conversation. My stomach——"

"Mr. Akinside," broke in the Old Codger, with ill-suppressed fury, "I am a patient man, and all such stuff, but I say, in tones of thunder, *confound your stomach!* Great day in the morning, man! Do you flatter yourself that you are the only person on earth who was ever cursed with a stomach? You make more fuss about that one stomach of yours than a camel does about all seven of his, or the late What's-his-name, the martyr, did over being burnt at the stake! Judging by the hooraw you put up about it, one would think that——"

"Wh-wh-why, you are insulting, sir!" spluttered the visitor, in indignant surprise. "I——"

"Yes; and you are worse than heathenish!" roared the Old Codger, thumping on the floor with his staff. "The idolator, clad only in pagan darkness and a clout, does homage to images of wood and stone; but you, dressed in the robe of enlightened Christianity, fall down and worship your own stomach! You think you suffer as nobody else ever suffered. You overestimate the importance of your own ache. The prime cause of your trouble is laziness——"

"Sir-r-r!"

"Laziness, is what I said! That's what's the matter with you, Akinside! Grab a buck-saw, and fiddle it vigorously across the face of the woodpile for a few weeks, and you'll forget you ever had a stomach. Dyspepsia is more of a fad than it is anything else, and nobody but lazy people have time to indulge in fads. And, even if your ache does pain you a trifle, occasionally, always remember that there are plenty of better people who are a great deal worse off than you are, and be thankful for that. Your own pain is purely a personal matter with you, so keep it to yourself; or, if you must tell it, hire a hall, pose as an awful example, and charge admission. Don't go whining around——"

But the unappreciated Akinside had jumped up and bolted out in great wrath, and with surprising agility for an invalid.

"Ar-r-r-r!" snarled the old man, after the last echo of the visitor's footfalls had died away. "He makes me weary, moaning about his infernal dyspepsia! Now, if it was rheumatism, it would be an entirely different matter!"

TOM P. MORGAN.



THE LADY—I hope you earned this reward-of-merit card, my lad.

THE LAD—Yer bet I did, ma'am. When I was takin' it away frum de good guy dat had it, t'ree of his frien's pitched inter me, an' I had ter lick de whole bunch.



CLARA—I have just heard of an awful scandal.

MAUD—Oh, what is it?

"I can't tell you now. I'm saving it for the church sociable."

SYLVIA'S HUSBAND

By Mrs. Burton Harrison

THROUGH a green wood near a castle not far from the western coast of Ireland, runs a salmon river, foaming here, tranquil there; everywhere beautiful to look upon, and coveted exceedingly by would-be tenants, whenever the owner's agents in London give sign to the public that the place and its fishing-privileges are to be let for the season.

Following up yonder leafy tunnel beside the stream to its finish, one comes to a halt beneath a steep flight of stone steps, affixed to a wall matted with roses and jasmine, on the summit of which, lost from below in a mist of tree-tops, is the terrace of Ballyrig Castle, upon which open the chief living-rooms.

There is nothing dark or frowning, or romantic or feudal, about Ballyrig. It is simply a big, pleasant old Irish country-house, standing amid park and gardens and fields of grain, in a country of purple hills and boggy moors and innumerable little lakes. But a few miles away the Atlantic booms upon the shore, and Ballyrig River runs through many a mile of the estate.

Indoors, the rooms are as cheerful and up-to-date as electricity, a London upholsterer and a house-party of gay, rollicking people can make them.

This was, at least, the case during the Summer when the castle was let to the William Hillyards, he a rich city man who two or three years before had committed the indiscretion of marrying a beautiful young wife who might have been his daughter—and he was still her infatuated slave, in spite of many disillusionings!

It had been said that it was Hugh Sargent whom Natalie would have married had there been money enough between them to keep this extravagant pair from the poorhouse. And, by the usual irony of Fate, directly after she became possessed of an elderly, jealous spouse, Hugh Sargent had fallen heir to an uncle's title and estates, and was now a baronet, owner of a stately old show-house and gardens not far from London.

Upon this bachelor establishment, Natalie would descend now and again, with parties of her friends, and please herself with ordering things as if it had been indeed her own.

Hugh submitted to these and other impositions of hers in a lazy way; but those who knew him best could see that he was beginning to chafe under her assumption of a continued proprietorship in him and his. Her quite extraordinary beauty might still palliate her exactions, and cast a glamour over her pose as the victim of a matrimonial *faux-pas*; but Hugh was a man of healthy mind, of daily renewing interests in life, and void of ambition to play the eternal game of three, especially when the husband had recently given symptoms of vulgar and elemental jealousy in his direction. Why he had consented to come to Ballyrig, at all, perhaps only Kit Vail suspected.

Vail, also a member of the present house-party, a friend of Sargent's of years' standing, and a thoroughly likable and trustworthy fellow, had a reason of his own for accepting the Hillyards' bid to Ireland. He could see, very plainly, that his hostess wished to

help matters along in his suit with her husband's ward, Sylvia Ridgeway, and for once—although differently inspired—agreeing with the fitful Natalie, Vail could not resist taking his holiday as her guest.

And what had been the result of this nicely adjusted scheme? Every day, since the arrival of Sargent and Vail, they had gone out with their rods, Sylvia accompanying them, by particular dispensation of Natalie, who loved to persuade herself that Sir Hugh's apparent zeal for sport was a blind to divert attention from his secret hopeless passion for herself. And, every day, Sargent and Sylvia would drift together, leaving Vail to the gillies, or any other companionship he could find.

Sylvia! Young, tall, slim, pretty, truth-telling, and admirably bred by the good ladies of the convent-school in France, where she had lived since her father's death when she was but fifteen! No wonder that she and Natalie would no more mix than oil and water! The transfer, without discussion, of this young woman to live in their own house, some ten months earlier, was the one of her husband's actions that Natalie considered most indefensible. Mr. Hillyard's plea that Sylvia was the child of his dearest friend of youth, as well as ill-provided with the means of livelihood, had been met successively by remonstrance, rebuke, pathos and tears, and, ultimately, sulks. Sylvia, in spite of all, had come, had stayed, had won every heart but Natalie's, and now Natalie, falling back upon piety, had decided Vail to be heaven's direct answer to her prayers for deliverance from her cross.

She did not like Kit Vail. He had always had a provoking way of looking through, not at, her. He, also, was a sort of cousin of Sylvia's. And she strongly suspected him of putting the brake on Hugh Sargent, whenever Hugh yielded to her whims, or gave color to the gossip that did not fail to dog their footsteps.

The other people in the Ballyrigg house-party included the Fortescues,

mother and daughter—rather a dreadful couple—but, then, Natalie distinctly did not like women to be too nice. Mrs. Fortescue, known as "Fair-and-Forty" to her friends, was a showy divorcee, who eked out her share of the wreck of matrimony by writing personals to newspapers from houses where she was invited as a guest, by playing suspicious rubbers of bridge, and by judicious borrowing from men.

Her too-mature daughter, Maud, resembling a gone-off Botticelli nymph, long, lank, with high cheek-bones, and unsatisfied corners to her mouth, dressed showily, said little, wore white veils with large, black dots, and evinced a marked preference for the society of undefended youths of a tender age and little knowledge of society.

During the last day or two, symptoms had appeared of Maudie's having attached herself seriously to the pursuit of Bobby Hillyard, a delightful boy of twenty, son and heir of the absent host, and far and away too good, thought Vail, Sargent and Sylvia, for the fate that threatened him.

Captain O'Rourke, a nice-looking soldier at large, with a happy faculty for making people friendly with him whether or not they quite approved of him; Baron de Lorme, a *confrère* at bridge with Mrs. Fortescue; Mr. Godfrey, who yearned to be thought an advanced decadent and had come to Ireland to write poetry which only he, the publisher, printers and proofreader could reasonably be counted upon to read, were the last ones left of the much larger party which Mr. Hillyard was supposed to have been called to London to avoid.

Luncheon time of a perfect day of July found young Bobby Hillyard coming up a path from the river into a wooded glen—a pretty, shady place, where several paths converged, and on one side of which arose a rocky cliff, giving to view a most lovely reach of distant landscape. Upon a carpet of moss and flowers were strewn moss-covered boulders surrounding a level spot, at the foot of which three slender,

white-stemmed birches leaned together over a little spring.

Bobby was attended by Terence, his own gillie, a cock-eyed Irishman of infinite good-fellowship, who carried his salmon tackle. The boy's ingenuous and merry young face was clouded by the bitterness of ill-luck.

"Hang it all, Terence!" he said, for perhaps the twentieth time during their walk, "I can't think how I let that big fellow get away."

"Sure, if he'd known you as well as I do, Masther Bobby," said the gillie, with prompt flattery, "he'd have sthayed along with ye."

"Shut up with your blarney!" Bobby answered, half-smiling. "In my opinion, the Ballyrig fishery's not half what it's cracked up to be, and I wish my governor had taken another river. The hanged part of it is having to leave Sargent down there hard at it. 'Twould be just like him to land a forty-pounder before he strikes work. Of course, Sylvia would be pleased. Girls always side with the lucky one. But Sargent won't have long, for it's nearly grub time, and this must be the place where we're to meet."

"'Deed, an' it is, Masther Bobby. Many's the time I've seen the quality sit here, atin' and drinkin' their fills, after a hard day's fish. Faith, 'tis a lovely spot for a picnic, an' I'm wishin' your honor good appetite, an' a taste of somethin' consolin', to make ye forget the foolishness o' thim salmon."

"You can go now, Terence. Take my traps back to the house; and, mind, when you get to the servants' hall, no blabbing about my poor sport to-day."

"'Deed, thin, I won't, sir," protested Terence. "I'd no more be tellin' it on ye than the fishes themselves would."

"I don't trust you," answered the lad, smiling, and taking a piece of silver from his pocket. "D'ye think this would make it worth your while to hold your tongue?"

"For the matther o' that, aday, sir," exclaimed Terence, with a cordial grin, "I'd go into residence in an asylum for the dumb."

Bobby was in the act of lighting a cigarette.

"Hullo! Wait a minute. What's that coming down the path from the castle, Terence?" he said, curiously.

"Sure, sir," the gillie answered, gazing up a tunnel of green boughs, "there do be somethin' comin'. Whether 'tis a lady or a gentleman, I can't rightly say; but 'twill be one or the other, I'll go bail."

"Aunty, by Jove!" cried Bobby, slapping his leg, ecstatically. "Aunty Loo, just from America. It's a lady, Terence, my governor's maiden sister, who quarreled with him at my christening, and flew away on a broomstick to the States. She's strong-minded, is Aunt Lucretia, and never yet was there a fad that passed her by. Wonder if I might count on her for a fiver, in the joy of reunion with her only nephew?"

"Sure, an' it's a butheful foine figgur of a man her ladyship is, entoiely," said Terence, straining his neck forward, lost in admiration and wonder.

A stout lady, dressed in mannish tweeds, wearing an alpine hat and spectacles, bore down upon him with such a rapid stride, that a collision ensued between the two. She fixed her gaze upon the offending gillie, making him shrivel visibly, and, in a voice of thunder, cried out:

"Man!"

"Confound you, Terence, get out with you!" said Bobby. And Terence flew.

"I hope my gillie hasn't hurt you, ma'am—bumping into you like that," he added.

"Only trampled my feet outrageously," was the indignant answer.

"Oh, but you know it wouldn't have happened if they'd been large enough to see."

Miss Lucretia fixed on him a penetrating gaze, but his sweet expression remained unwavering.

"Humph!" said she, finally, a comment into which the good lady was wont to put a startling variety of emphasis.

"Come to the picnic? Nice mornin', isn't it?" Bobby hurried on, rather nervously.

"And pray, sir, who are you?" asked she, cutting him short, without compunction.

"I don't know for certain, but I rather think I'm your nephew, Auntie Loo; incidentally, your brother William's only child; in brief, Robert Charles Ernest Alured Hillyard, commonly known as Bobby."

"You, Bobby?" she said, severely. "Why, it's impossible! When I last saw you, they were quieting you with a bottle."

"They can do so still, aunty, every time."

"Come to think of it, I've brought you a little horse," said aunty, with the ghost of a twinkle in her eyes.

"Make it a pony, Auntie Loo, and you'll put an indigent relative under a debt of everlasting gratitude."

"What *do* you mean, boy? It can't be that William, rich as he is, refuses to provide for his only son! No, sir, I've heard of you—throw away that filthy cigarette!"

"I beg your pardon," Bobby said, obeying meekly.

"A good cigar, now, I can stand. But a nasty cigarette—I'll lend you my monograph on that subject—pah! Now, Mr. Robert Charles Ernest Alured Hillyard, commonly known as Bobby, if you can look me squarely in the face, and tell me you're not an idle, extravagant fellow, who richly deserves being kept on a small allowance—as to whom there are grave doubts whether he'll manage to pull through the university—why, hold out your hand, and I'll give you that fiver—yes, and five times that fiver, on the spot."

Bobby looked the old lady full in the eyes. Hers had in them a combination of expressions of which it was hard for him to distinguish the one predominant.

"I wish I could, Auntie Loo," he said, simply, putting his hands behind him.

"Bobby Hillyard, I'll not tip you, but I'll—I'll shake hands with you!" exclaimed the Amazon.

"All right, aunty," said he, submitting to a mighty shake; "I thought

you ought to know. I've spent a pot of money at college, and my governor is no end riled about my prospects of, as you say, skinning through—"

"Riled!—as I say. 'Skinning through'! Robert, where did you get such common expressions?"

"Americanisms, aunty. Thought they'd make you feel at home. Learned 'em from Capper, a boss Yankee in college with me. I was half-back on his team."

"Half-back! Poor fellow! I thought you seemed anatomically correct," said the lady, proceeding to walk around him, in critical survey. "Nonsense, child! you're as straight as straight can be. Come, now, I'll take you in hand! I'll begin by giving you my leaflet on the adaptation to modern life of the Pythagorean creed."

"Pytho—anything to do with snakes?" asked he, politely.

"Is it possible, young man, you have never read my monograph on 'The Perfectly Rounded Life'?"

"Where you said every one should wear Jaeger from top to toe?" he answered, brightening.

"Nonsense! That was ages ago. I now go in for aerated linen mesh," said Aunt Loo, with perfect gravity. "No, my dear lad; my work aims for the reform through simplification, as Tolstoy calls it, of the customs, the clothes, the belongings, of the so-called upper classes of society."

"I say, what a jolly field you'll find us at Ballyrig!"

"That is exactly what I supposed," she answered, drily; "and, as you seem to possess some lucid intervals of intelligence, I'll thank you to explain to me, to begin with, the way things stand in my brother William's establishment. Ever since he married, three years ago, I have been making up my mind to run over, and have a look into William's affairs. Crossed at a day's notice, found him absent from London; followed him to Ireland; nobody here knows where he is; his servants treat me like an escaped lunatic; his wife lies abed at midday, and

sends me a message by a flyaway, pert maid, to meet her for luncheon in the glen at two."

"Awfully sorry, Aunt Loo," said Robert, penitentially, "but, you know, my governor's most always doing somethin' mysterious at the bank. And, as to Natalie——"

"Natalie! The vain, extravagant girl, young enough to be his daughter! The flyaway, fine lady, from what I gather the worst example of her degenerate class! Does she never get up to breakfast?"

"Well, aunty, if that's all, you know when you've been playing bridge all night——"

"I playing bridge all night?" interrupted she, irately. "Bobby Hillyard, you curdle my blood with the suggestion!"

"That's your loss, Aunt Loo. Come, now, if you want missionary work at Ballyrig, take my advice, and don't bother about Natalie. Go in for Sylvia."

"Sylvia—who's Sylvia?"

"Sylvia! Why, aunty, where have you been that you haven't heard of my governor's ward, Sylvia Ridgeway?—bar one, the loveliest, sweetest girl alive!"

"Not Clive Ridgeway's daughter?"

"Yes. He was an artist chap, an old friend of my father's. Died abroad, leaving Sylvia to be brought up in a French convent till she was nineteen. Then, my governor was to say what she should do, and so he went over there, last year, saw Sylvia, knocked under to her, like everybody else, except Natalie and her pals, and, by Jove! ended by bringing the poor dear over to live with us."

"Clive Ridgeway," repeated Miss Hillyard, softly, as if she hardly heard him speaking.

"Ever know the gentleman?" inquired Bobby, politely.

To his surprise, the old lady's face was puckered with an expression as if combining an inclination to sneeze with the pathos of a tender memory. She made two strides over to a fern-fringed boulder, and sat down upon it

—solidly, it must be owned—then wiped her spectacles.

"Yes, Robert, I knew him," she said, in a voice of surprising gentleness, "long, long ago, before he fell in love with a penniless girl who had no theories. Clive Ridgeway was, take him by and large, the best expression I ever saw Nature make of a perfect gentleman. He married. His wife was always ill. They wandered about Europe, he painting pictures nobody ever bought. I heard there was a child who survived her parents, but I did not know its name. Sylvia!—after his mother. Robert Hillyard, don't tell me that girl's like the rest of the people here?"

"You'll see! If you do get any influence over her, aunty, tell her not to fish any more with Sargent."

"Sargent?" queried Miss Loo, gruffly.

"The Sir Hugh Sargent, Natalie's own particular; and Natalie thinks all the time Sylvia's with Kit Vail."

"Natalie's own particular what?" asked Miss Loo, in simply awful tones.

"All Natalie's set have them," said Bobby, struggling, "the kind she'd tear another girl's eyes out if she tried to get him away. And the worst of it is, Sylvia's too green to see through this business of Natalie's, and now Sargent's taken a regular shine to Sylvia, and they fish together every day, and Natalie doesn't fish, and, if Natalie finds out what's going on, Sylvia will go higher than a kite. Understand?"

"I understand," said Miss Loo.

"If Sylvia would only fancy Kit Vail, who's dead stuck on her—but she won't, and, oh—Lord! there's nothing so obstinate as a woman, Aunt Loo."

"Christopher Vail! He would be Anthony Vail's son—a cousin of Clive Ridgeway's, and so of Sylvia's."

"Yes; near enough to bully, but not near enough to kiss," smiled Bobby. "He's a good fellow and a safe fellow, Vail is, and Natalie keeps on letting Sylvia fish with us, because

she hopes Vail will take Sylvia off her hands. Beg pardon, ma'am, am I making myself clear?"

"Too clear," answered Aunt Loo, groaning.

"Then you will take Sylvia up?"

"How, 'take her up'?"

"Be a sort of a kind of a mother to her, won't you, aunty?"

Again Aunt Loo wiped her spectacles. "You're not half a bad fellow, Robert. You spoke just now of your need of a small sum." She took out a pocket-book, and produced two agreeably crackling snowy notes, which she placed in his hand. "Oblige me by accepting twenty pounds."

"I say, aunty, you *are* a brick, you know," exclaimed the beneficiary, gratefully; "and I can't rest till you see Sylvia. She's the only person in our house that's really your size."

"Really my size?"

"I don't mean in—in circumference," he said, abashed.

"Why don't you say what you *do* mean?" she snapped. "Robert, is Sylvia the only other lady in your house-party?"

"Bless you, no!" he exclaimed, growing radiant. "If I didn't mention Maudie Fortescue, it's because you have to *see* her to realize her. If the governor would ever give me a chance at independence, she wouldn't be Maudie Fortescue much longer, I tell you! And, of course, there's Maudie's mother—Natalie's great pal—a very distinguished lady."

"What's she distinguished for?" asked Miss Lucretia, drily.

"Writing! Why, Aunt Loo, she's 'Dot' in the *Weekly Free Lance*, 'Portia' in Trilby's column of *Legal Advice to Women*, the 'Fair Financier' in the money article of *Fashion's Guide*, assistant editress of *Pussy's Magazine*, and 'Madge' in *The Haberdasher's Monthly*."

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed his hearer, helplessly. "And where's Mr. Fortescue?"

"Divorced," said Bobby. "Aunt Loo, here comes Sylvia. You'll see Sylvia. Why, by Jove, she's all alone!

Vail and Sargent must be having luck, confound 'em!"

With more emotion than she cared to show, old Miss Hillyard looked in the direction indicated by her nephew. She saw coming up the steep rise of the path, with a swift, firm tread, a tall young creature with something of the Springtime freshness, of the wood's vernal beauty, in her face and form. Sylvia wore a short skirt of tan frieze, with russet leggings, and a hat garlanded with salmon flies, and in her belt was a bunch of purple heather. At sight of the grotesque old figure keeping Bobby company, a flash of divination came into her eyes, and she quickened her pace toward them.

"You—you are Aunt Loo!" she cried. "Please, may I kiss you?"

It was as if a rose-leaf had fallen upon a wall.

Aunt Loo received the caress with a gasp.

"Why, such a thing hasn't happened to me in forty years," she said.

"Oh, but I've heard ever so much of you!" cried Sylvia, joyously, "and you'd never guess from whom—from my dear, dear father, who always said you were the truest woman with the biggest heart he knew."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Aunt Loo, rising.

"I haven't offended you?" asked Sylvia.

"No."

"Aren't you feeling well?"

"I'm always well. I'll just go take a little turn."

"Let us go with you, aunty," said Bobby.

"Not a bit of it, boy. I prefer—I'm used to being alone."

"At least, you'll come back for luncheon?"

"I take mine in my bedroom, in tabloid form," said Miss Hillyard.

"But just for to-day, you'll stop with us?" coaxed Sylvia.

"Of course she will," affirmed Bobby.

"Well, then, just for to-day," answered the subdued Amazon, looking from one bright young face to the other. "But let me alone for a bit,

will you, and I'll find my way back all right.—Sylvia!"

"Yes, Auntie Loo."

"They say you are like your father, don't they, child? There, now, don't answer me. I can't abide being answered back by young people. Take care of her, Bobby, till I come again. Do what Bobby tells you, Sylvia!"

The large lady vanished in the green wood, and Bobby whistled.

"I say, Sylvia, that's a gay old mastodon. But see here, dear, I've a word to say to you, alone."

Sylvia seated herself upon a stone, and took off her hat.

"Then speak up, Bobby, like the pretty boy you are. And I'll do what Bobby tells me, I suppose."

Bobby hemmed and hawed, blushing the while.

"You know I'm something like a brother to you, dear. Please don't mind if I ask you whether you're going to take Kit Vail."

"Take Kit Vail! Not on your life, I'm not, Bobby. You taught me that, and I'm much obliged to you."

"But why, Sylvia?"

"Oh, because."

"Because what?"

"Bobby, you're a nuisance. Dear old Kit! He's real, he's loyal, there's nobody in all the world I'd sooner go to with my troubles, but—"

Her silence was eloquent.

"That's the end of Vail, then. Now, Sylvia, don't be vexed with me—"

"I shall be, Bobby, furiously, if you say the silly things you began to hint at yesterday. In the first place, there's not the slightest risk of such a thing!"

"Sylvia!"

"He hasn't the ghost of an idea of wanting me."

"Who's been with you this livelong day? Who gave you the best pools to cast in? Think of that, will you? The best pool to a girl! Oh, Lord!"

"Bobby, you're rude; and, besides, you shouldn't spy."

Bobby shared her stone, and put on his most persuasive air.

"Sylvia, dear," he said, leaning toward her, "I'm a man, you know,

and fellows know better than girls about some kinds o' things. Take my advice—don't go in for Sargent. It isn't safe."

"Bobby," answered Sylvia, deliberately, "I'm a girl, you know, and girls know better than fellows about some kinds o' things. Take my advice—don't go in for Maud Fortescue. It isn't safe."

"Who said—?" began Bobby, guiltily. "And, anyhow, I'd like to know what fault you can find with Maudie."

"For one thing, she's years and years older than you are," said Sylvia, smoothly.

"That statement is beneath my dignity," said Robert, rising and walking off with his hands in the pockets of his Norfolk jacket.

"They call her 'The Baby Snatcher'," went on Sylvia, provokingly.

Bobby started, fiercely. "Whoever, in my presence, applies such an epithet to that noble woman, does so at his peril!"

The crisis was interrupted by Terence, running up the river path, waving his torn hat with rapture.

"Masther Bobby, dear! such news! an' you, miss, that lift him a bit too soon, I'm thinkin'! It's Sir Hugh that's just after landin' the big, big salmon that ran Masther Bobby down the river. A forty-pounder, I'll go bail. Wirra, ma sthrue, but it's the beautiful play he gave the divil before he landed him! Sir Hugh bid me say he'd join you directly, miss. Listen to that, now, an' ye'll hear the b'ys cheerin' him below!"

Sylvia started joyfully to her feet, her cheeks glowing, and listened to the sweet music of distant cheering for the victor.

Bobby, on the contrary, was divided between excitement over the news, and a burst of native dignity. "Now, why in the world should anybody suppose I'm interested in Sargent's luck?"

"Because you honestly are, Bobby," the girl answered, patting him on the back. "Put pride in your pocket, go with Terence to see the monster, that

should have been your prey—then, bring Vail and Sir Hugh to luncheon here, and, by the time you get back, you and I will have forgotten that we ever disagreed."

"But, all the same, you'll remember what I told you about Sargent?"

"Exactly, as long as you remember what I told you about Maudie," she cried, archly, pushing him off after Terence.

Then, the smile became overclouded on her April face, and her step lagged, as she turned back into the solitude of the little glen.

"Safe? Why isn't it safe?" she thought, sighing. "How horrid of Bobby, just when I was thinking the world had never looked so beautiful!"

"Ah! there you are, Miss Ridgeway," said a voice behind her. Turning, with a face again radiant, she saw Sargent revealing himself in active strides over the steep side of the cliff.

He was covered with twigs and moss, and had evidently pushed his way through tough undergrowth to reach her.

"What possessed you to come up there?" she cried.

"The shortest way to reach you, wasn't it? Most unfair of you, I call it, to run away from a comrade, just at the critical moment when he couldn't look around."

"It seems my departure brought you luck," she said, shyly, as he came toward her with decidedly a possessive air.

"Luck! What was luck if my wood-nymph did not share it?"

"Accept my congratulations, nevertheless," she said, drawing back a little from the fervor of his tones.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Ridgeway. I forget that the idyll's over. Jove! 'twas worth living while it lasted, though."

"Presently, when they all come out to luncheon, you'll forget the idyll. And that reminds me, the man ought to be here with the hampers. I promised the housekeeper to see that they lay the cloth properly. Don't you think this would be the best place for it?"

She left him, going over to clear the fallen leaves away from a wide, mossy level upon the knoll.

"What's come to you in this little time since you left me?" he said, throwing himself on the ground beside the spring, and watching her, discontentedly. "I'll swear, I don't understand it. All this morning, you've been a genius of the woods; now, you look like a pretty Puritan. Come, out with it, Miss Ridgeway! Somebody's been poisoning your mind against me. As a general thing, I don't care a—well, a fish-hook—what any one says of me. But, to-day, I'm anxious as a schoolboy working for a prize. Come, whom have you met? What have they told you? If there are any good and sufficient reasons why you're to chill on me, for heaven's sake let's hear them, and be done with it."

"How strange you are!" she said, looking at him, guilelessly. "I don't think I ever saw you quite like this, before."

He had pulled himself up on one elbow, and was flushing darkly. While her gaze rested upon him, he seemed to pass under a spell of self-control. She said no more, and presently he turned, with a laugh, toward the little spring.

"What a savage I am! And what a jolly little spring! Please, lady, won't you give a cup of water to a tired fisherman?"

"Certainly; only, there's no cup. Will this do?" And she hastily pinned together two large-sized leaves, filled them, and offered them, dripping, to his lips.

"Nearer, please. Don't be so stingy," he said, seizing her wrist to bring the sylvan goblet within reach. Alas! the cup parted, the water glided earthward, and he was left kissing her hand with fervor.

"Don't, don't! Sir Hugh!" cried the girl, breaking away from him, and going over to entrench herself against a tree bole opposite.

"I never intended anything less in all my life," he said, rising to follow her. "Sylvia, you believe me, don't you?"

"Yes; if you say so. But promise you'll never do so any more."

"Why? that's the question. Why mayn't I? Who is to say us nay?"

Then, a sudden frost came over him. He checked himself abruptly, and, with a short, brusque laugh, retreated well within the safety line of distance.

"Sylvia—Miss Ridgeway," he said, presently, "do you chance to remember how we first met?"

"I? Oh, how could I forget it?" she answered, innocently. "I have too little in my life."

"It was a foggy afternoon of belated Spring in town: You had not long come to live in Pont street. I knew only vaguely of your existence. I had dropped in to call on Mrs. Hillyard—she had not returned from her drive. You gave me tea."

"Very bad tea—French tea, convent tea. But I know better now."

"The room was filled with violets and narcissuses——"

"Yes; you sent them to Natalie; don't you remember?"

"Did I? I had forgotten. At any rate, they have ever since suggested you to me. At first, you were badly bored by my visit, and wanted to go on with your book."

"Because I saw—any girl could have seen—you were only condescending—making talk until Natalie should come in."

"I was properly punished, when you began by amusing, then piqued, then interested, me thoroughly. And the interest has never failed or palled."

"Then Natalie came in!" she cried, gaily, "and, in two minutes, put me in my proper place. She made me feel the presumption of a callow school-girl trying to entertain a man of your place in the world. I went out, feeling absolutely squashed—like a housemaid who's been had up for a lecture. After that, there was an awful gap, when I never laid eyes on you till the day in the Park. You rode up to the rail, and spoke to me when I was out walking with Natalie's maid and the two dogs."

"Next, came our daringly surrepti-

tious visit to the Wallace collection, where you forgot all about me in your zeal for pots and pans and other antiquities."

"I did think you rather old, at first. But I've long since got over that. How frightened I was lest Natalie should find out we'd been to that gallery, and scold me for letting you take such trouble to entertain a mere nobody in her husband's house."

"Then, Ranelagh," said Sargent.

"When you hardly spoke to me," said Sylvia.

"I couldn't," Sargent said.

"The next great occasion was the dinner at the Hillyards'—a never-to-be-forgotten chance."

"When somebody failed, and Natalie sent up-stairs for me in a hurry, and brought me down in that shabby old muslin. Her maid had just time to pin some roses in. I was paired off with a grim old professor who thought of nothing but his food—and you—you——"

"I, by an accident of my own contriving, sat on your other side," he added, after a pause. "Jove! that dinner in that house was like coming from a hot walk to sit by this little spring."

They had unconsciously drawn nearer together.

"Then," Sylvia said, heaving a heartfelt sigh, "I actually never laid eyes on you again till we came here."

Sargent smiled at her naiveté.

"What Ireland has been to both of us! These long, delicious days on the river and the moors! Sylvia, before I met you, I hardly knew what a real girl is like."

"We are out now, I believe," she said, archly. "But, maybe, we'll be coming in again."

"The contrast between your sort and these maidens who know all things—the faded, bridge-mad matrons, the daring divorcees, the wives who excel in the fine art of skating over the thin ice of propriety and just not breaking through—is simply incredible. Ah, little Sylvia, why didn't I meet you before I'd been a spendthrift of my better self? You say you see a differ-

ence in me. Shall I tell you what it is? The difference between a man with closed eyes letting himself be borne along by a treacherous current, and the same man wide-awake, clear-brained, strong of will and of purpose, steering himself through an open, tossing sea."

"As you are now, as you must always be!" she said, exultingly.

"As you have made me," he added.

"Oh, I'm so glad, so proud!" she exclaimed, with engaging fervor.

"Then, you won't mistrust me—ever?"

"Why should I?" she asked; "especially when believing in you means so much to me."

"Ah, Sylvia, you do care, then?" he began, and then stopped, as if a door had closed between them.

He walked away and returned to where she sat, motionless, wondering, thrilling.

"There! I'm myself again. The Midsummer madness has passed out of my veins. I'll stroll away a bit and come back to you when the others are around you. But to show me I've not offended you, would you mind shaking hands with me?"

Sylvia placed her hand in his so frankly, yet with such a great lady's grace, that he took her finger-tips, feeling as if some passing royalty had bent his way in favor.

And, while they were so engaged, neither observed the approach of a looker-on, who stood for a moment, glowering, rather than gazing, through a thicket of young leaves.

"And now I really must keep my promise to Natalie, and pick out a good place to spread our feast," said Sylvia.

"Shall I help you? If not, I've a fancy to go down yonder to the water-side, and see if the gillies and Bobby have done the proper thing by my big fish."

He spoke lightly, conventionally, and, moving off, lifted his cap as to an acquaintance of every day. But Sylvia stood thrilling, a breathing statue of happiness. One moment she would

give to this delicious dream, and then—

A voice, a crash of some one coming through the boughs! To her surprise and alarm, she saw that it was her guardian, Mr. Hillyard, whom nobody supposed to be within gunshot of the gay household at Ballyrig.

"Why, Uncle Will, how good that you've come back!" she cried, running to meet him, and throwing her arms around his neck, impulsively. "But you're ill, dear. You've—bad news?" she added, seeing the worn look of his face, the haggard gleam in his habitually somber eyes.

"It's nothing, child. You are really glad to see me, Sylvia—or is this put on, the way you women do so easily? I'd like to believe you."

"Whom should I be glad to see, if not you, who have given me everything?" she said, tenderly.

"Sylvia, I do believe you. See here, my dear, you wouldn't tell me a lie, would you, even if you thought it would save me a great sorrow?" he said, looking her in the eyes.

"I hope not, dear. But you frighten me. Tell me about yourself."

"No matter about me. I've a question to put to you—a plain, rough question, from a plain, rough man. It's about the fellow whom I saw standing here holding your hand a moment since."

"Sir Hugh Sargent?" said Sylvia, facing him, fearlessly.

"I'm not one to beat about the bush. I've reasons, and good ones, for going straight to my point. Is it as your lover he has come under my roof, or as my wife's?"

Sylvia felt that somewhere the Summer sky had parted as with a lightning flash.

"Your wife's?" she repeated, mechanically.

"Answer!" he said, imperiously.

"How can I, when the idea comes to me for the first time now?" she stammered.

Hillyard drew a freer breath.

"Perhaps I'm hasty. God knows I'm a brute in manners. I ought to

have prepared you better. But I couldn't suppose you could live in the house so long with Natalie, and not know her little ways."

Sylvia held her head up. "At least, her husband should not be the one to teach them to me."

"Oh, I know, I know! The husband, in these cases, should do nothing but eat his heart out while trying to be a gentleman according to their code. I'm not a gentleman, perhaps. Sylvia, don't look so! If Sargent is not here for Natalie, it must be you. A man doesn't look at a girl like he did at you, just now, without some reason for it. Tell me he loves you, Sylvia. Tell me, and you may save—"

"Not even you, Uncle Will, shall drive me to the wall like this," she cried. "It is cruel, cruel—"

"Oh, these women—as obstinate as they are treacherous!" the man said, with growing wrath. "Curse him! I believe the cad's been playing a double game, and is even a lower blackguard than I thought."

The blood ran up into Sylvia's cheeks; fire flashed from her eyes.

"Don't dare! don't dare!" she exclaimed. "If you were ten times what you are to me, I'd throw those base words back into your face!"

"Clive Ridgeway over again," said he, in a bewildered tone. "Sylvia, he fought me once, and justly. I haven't forgotten that licking. Dear old Clive! Child, you're a perfect spitfire, but I believe you told the truth."

"I mean to be a spitfire whenever you're so wickedly unjust."

"Maybe I am—maybe I am," Hillyard went on, sinking upon a stone, and passing his hand over his brow. "But wait till you know the provocation. Sylvia, you haven't lived with us six months, not to see that my home's a wreck from the woman I've put into it."

"Please, please, Uncle Will—"

"Oh, I'm going to be brief. In this age, nobody listens to explanations. I'll get it all into as few words as need be. I've borne what she's put upon me. I see myself as she thinks me."

"Uncle Will—"

"There, I'm coming to the point. Over a week ago, I told her that I would be detained in town a fortnight. But I came back at once, and have been stopping in the neighborhood. Sylvia, don't look at me like that. I tell you, I had to know!"

"Oh, uncle, must I hear?" she cried, shrinking and growing pale.

"I'm afraid you must," Hillyard answered, with, however, a visible effort at self-control. "And I should also tell you that I have given her every chance—that I warned her to take care how she dragged my honor in the mire."

"Uncle Will," the girl said, shaking, for a look had come into his eyes that frightened her, "won't you do me a little favor? Come with me to look up your sister, who has come to visit you. Aunt Loo will be so glad! She loves you; she will know what to do."

"All in good time, my dear. I'll see Lucretia later. Just now, I've got to get you to read this." And, taking a crumpled paper from his pocket, he placed it in her trembling hand. "Read, will you? Let me hear how it sounds."

"It is Natalie's handwriting," whispered Sylvia.

"Of course it is. And, what is more, it was taken from Sargent's coat-pocket," he said, smiling in ghastly fashion.

Sylvia started, electrically. "And you ask me to read it?" she cried, scornfully. "Oh, never, uncle, in the world!"

She thrust the paper into his hand, and started to leave him.

"Not so fast, young lady!" cried Hillyard, grasping her arm. "What! not even curious, when it's addressed to the fellow who, a moment since, played the gallant to you? As you like! A husband, in my circumstances, can't afford to be so choice. I'll read it to you."

Sylvia struggled.

"No, no! I refuse to hear! It is probably just some trifle about our picnic."

Hillyard snarled, savagely.

"You think so? Listen!"

"Be in the Hunter's Glen after the others have scattered for the afternoon. I must see you. You cannot refuse me. *In memoriam.* Always,

" 'NATALIE.' "

"Call that a picnic, eh?"

While he was gloating over the paper from which he read aloud, he did not observe that Sylvia had turned her back to him, and was stopping her ears with two determined hands.

"No use, uncle," she called out, defiantly; "I haven't heard a single, solitary word."

Hillyard seized her arms roughly, and pulled them down, whirling her about, as if to strike her. Sylvia did not flinch as she faced him; but, when his hand dropped without touching her, she burst into bitter tears.

"There—there, child! Don't mind me," said he, returning to his senses, and trying to make amends. "I'm not patient, at any time, and I've had a lot of things to make me distrustful of even my best friend. I—I hardly knew what I was about. Don't you fear me! It wasn't you who put me beyond myself! If I came here to harm any one, it was certainly not you—Sylvia—poor little Sylvia!"

"Uncle, if you love me, come away; not back to the house, though, for we shall certainly meet the rest of them coming out."

"Asses and fools, all of 'em! my wife's friends!" he grumbled.

"Come, please, before they get here. Think of the scandal of an outburst before those gossiping people, who, whatever your grievance, will spread it far and wide."

"Let them! The world is bound to know."

"Before your own son!—your servants! No, no, uncle; you're not yourself, or you'd not dream of doing it!"

Her tender fervor overcame him. He allowed himself to be led into the path; then he suddenly stood still, and handled a blackthorn stick with ominous zeal and relish.

"No, my dear," he said, with a cunning look. "Sorry to disappoint you, but you're a woman. You fancy Sargent, and I'm afraid it's a put-up job.

Sargent's been playing a dangerous game, and I'm going to stop it. I'll settle with Natalie, afterward. Take my advice, run back to the house, play the piano, dress your dolls—do anything; only—damn it, don't you interfere with me!"

Sylvia clasped her hands, desperately. A moment, and it might be too late to ward off the catastrophe. Then, luck came to her aid, in the merry, boyish voice of Bobby, hailing her from beneath the cliff.

"Hullo, Syl-v-i-a-a!"

Sylvia ran joyfully to the ledge, and looked over.

"Hullo, Bobby! What's up?"

"Biggest sort of business! I've killed a beauty! Tips the scale at thirty-one. We're bringing mine and Sargent's up to show you!"

"That's right! Hurry!"

With his boy's voice sounding in his ear, Hillyard pulled himself together to face the consequences to Bobby of his proposed assertion of his rights as a husband. There was no need to make a by-word and a laughing-stock of his only son.

Hillyard stood, for a moment, uncertain; then, before Sylvia could rejoin him, he hastened away in the direction taken by Miss Lucretia.

"Victory!—but at what a cost!" said poor Sylvia, for the first time allowing her personal interest in the affair to come uppermost.

A triumphant procession now wound up the hill-path. It consisted of the gillies, bearing two monster salmon; was headed by Bobby and Sargent, wearing wreaths of heather around their caps, and brought up by Vail, undecorated, but philosophically serene. Simultaneously, from the castle side arrived two smug footmen, in livery, carrying between them a hamper, and likewise two large and well-filled baskets. In a short time, the glen echoed with the sound of cheery voices, Bobby's taking the lead in his joy of rehabilitation as a fisherman. When Sylvia had admired and praised his prize to his heart's content, and Bobby had fallen back upon Sargent as an

auditor, Vail took the opportunity to free himself to Sylvia of certain things evidently weighing on his mind.

He was a frank-faced man of two-and-thirty, steadfast of gaze, and inspiring confidence at sight, his manner quaintly suggestive of conviction that the world sought him for what he did for it, rather than for what he was.

"Sylvia, something is troubling you," he said, in the girl's ear; "something serious!"

"Nothing you can help, Kit," she answered, trying to smile, as usual.

"Sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Hullo, Vail!" interrupted Bobby, who had got hold of a footman, and was directing the opening of a long-necked bottle. "Come, join us in a hock-and-soda."

"And while you do, I'll pick a few flowers for the table," said Sylvia, going away into the wood, relieved to be alone.

Vail drew a long breath. Then, affecting to be absorbed in matters in the direction of the castle, he sang out to Bobby, mischievously:

"Hullo, boy! Better get under shelter. She's coming, with her mama!"

Bobby, having drained a tall glass of mild, amber liquid, felt emboldened to turn on his tormentor with hauteur.

"Kindly remember, Vail, that those ladies are my guests!" Then, with a sudden crash of dignity, he took to his heels to meet the new arrivals, still at some distance from the scene.

"The Baby Snatcher?" queried Sargent, lazily.

"At her same old game!" answered Vail, groaning. "But hang me if I thought she'd succeed with our level-headed boy!"

"He'll survive her. Many have."

"I don't know. The situation has its terrors, now that Mrs. Fortescue has joined in hot pursuit. 'Member the newspaper head-line, 'How Shall We Capture De Wet?' and the answer in our club, 'Send Mrs. Fortescue'?"

"Insufferable woman! But, Vail,

I'm not in the humor to talk of the Fortescues. I'm more than bothered about my own affairs."

"I told you, when you came here—" began Vail, but was cut short by the other, promptly.

"Bah! That's not what I mean."

"Indeed? I thought—"

"You thought wrong. You always made more of it than it deserved. I swear to you, Vail, it was only a silly, sham affair; a sickly, sentimental alliance of affinities, she calls it—some stuff she's learned from that creature, Godfrey. Gad! what fools we mortals be when we're too lazy to remonstrate against woman's whims! Certainly, since I have been in Ireland—"

Vail interrupted him in a constrained tone.

"I know what you mean. But the point is, Mrs. Hillyard doesn't."

"She has nothing to do with it. Kit, I want you to believe that I haven't forgotten what you told me in the smoking-room at Chelford, two months ago."

"That I meant to try to win Sylvia."

"Well?"

"Well, I can't."

"Are you certain?"

"My dear chap, you, of all men, who have known me all my life, don't need to be informed that Nature has handicapped me with the unlimited confidence of the other sex. Women respect me—deadly word!—borrow money from me, allow me to slave for them, but love me—never! Better far were I one of those reckless daredevils who rack the feminine soul with dear uncertainties. As a friend, a legal adviser, a best man, a partner at cards, and an adjuster, I have had my innings. Recently, I was even asked to stand godfather to a little, wailing unregenerate in lace. But, there my successes end. Needless to say, my charming young cousin is no exception to her sisterhood."

"Then you vacate the field?" said Sargent, trying to chime in with his humor.

"Naturally. But I may as well tell you, Hugh, that as long as you stay in this house, I don't give it up to you."

"Hang your insinuations!"

"Besides, to speak frankly, the difference in position between Sylvia Ridgeway, fortuneless spinster, and Christopher Vail, working barrister, is not nearly so conspicuous as it would be between her and a run-after man like you. I can't seem to see the possibility of your being in earnest in wanting her; and, let me say here, that anything short of dead earnest—*dead earnest, mind you*—won't do from you to Sylvia, while I am above ground."

"Do you mean that for a threat?" Sargent said, hotly.

"No," answered Vail, in the same cool, half-whimsical manner. "But I think I see you tottering over an abyss you are not prepared to fall into."

"I declare again that you are wrong. Of the feeble flame that once burnt between me and a nameless lady, nothing is left but ashes."

"On your side—but on hers?"

"Oh, confound you, Kit!"

"It's the forgotten spark in the forsaken bonfire that generally does all the mischief."

Sargent felt that he could no longer bear that quiet, insistent voice.

"Don't be Delphic," he said, rising.

"If it's any good to you to know it, I have already informed our hostess that I am leaving her hospitable roof to-night."

Vail, too, arose. "That is the best news I have had. Hullo, here they all come. The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!"

II

THEREUPON, the sweet seclusion of this pet nook of the sylvan deities was profaned by the invasion of a rustling, chattering, brilliant little band of worldlings, constitutionally intent upon getting amusement from the passing hour.

Of these, Natalie Hillyard was easily the high priestess. Her type was distinguished, her beauty and good form were indisputable. Her presence exhaled captivation. Wherever she moved, the gaze of the looker-on must follow. Beside her, the high-colored and modish Mrs. Fortescue appeared coarse in the execution. But her eye was restless, her mouth unsatisfied, and the trained sweetness of her voice could too readily lapse into fretful chiding.

The three men in attendance upon the two ladies—O'Rourke, de Lorme and Godfrey—seemed content to act as foils to their elaborated art.

Natalie, little accustomed to control her impulses, went at once to Sargent, pointedly ignoring Vail.

"We are late, I suppose," she said, letting her eyes sweep over him, and softening her tones.

"Are you? I don't know," answered Sargent, in an even voice, audible to the others.

"How could Sir Hugh be expected to take account of mere time, when he's the hero of the day?" said Mrs. Fortescue, suavely. "That was what kept us—meeting your salmon on the way, and stopping to pay it homage!"

"As a matter of fact," said Hugh, "I have taken very close account of the time since breakfast. I am ravenous for my luncheon."

"Let us sit down at once, then," said Mrs. Hillyard, sharply. "Where is Sylvia? Mr. Vail, I trusted her to you."

"I will answer for her prompt return with some wild flowers to deck your feast."

"Maudie, too, is missing. So tiresome of people—dropping out. Captain O'Rourke, what became of Robert?"

"Godfrey, where's Robert?" asked O'Rourke, slyly, of the poet, who was making eyes at the dainties awaiting them.

"What? I know not," answered the gifted one, dreamily. "I see only the witcheries of this wondrous forest, in which I wander like a new-born child."

"Let him alone," remarked Vail; "he'll have cut his teeth by the time we come to eating."

"Robert should be here," said Natalie, complainingly.

"*Ma foi, madame*, if you will permit me," said de Lorme, upon whom her generally rebuking eye rested, "I would not wait on the missing ones. From what I observed, Mr. Bobbee and Mademoiselle Maudie will be for some little time engaged in the agreeable business of losing themselves like—what you call it?—'Ze Babies in ze Woods.'"

"I shall certainly speak to Robert's father," observed Mrs. Hillyard, whose frowns did not lessen as Sargent kept away from her.

"And I shall scold my little girl," said Mrs. Fortescue, smoothly. "Please, Captain O'Rourke, oblige me by going to look for those heedless children, and say we expect them here immediately. That way, wasn't it, where we left them, baron?" And she pointed, airily, in a totally opposite direction.

"*Parfaitement, madame*," de Lorme said, acquiescing; then added, in her ear, "but you are a genius——"

"I'll go, ma'am!" exclaimed the courteous captain, "and, bedad, if it's humanly possible, I'll fetch the dear wanderers home."

Natalie again approached Sargent.

"Sir Hugh, I have a word to say to you."

Sargent passed her, and went a few steps after O'Rourke.

"Hurry, captain, or the robins may have covered 'em from sight."

"Are you determined to evade me?" asked Natalie, when Hugh's laughing face turned back upon their group.

"Won't there be time enough for that sort of thing by-and-bye?" answered Sargent, wearily.

"Hugh, have you told Mrs. Hillyard about your exciting struggle with Leviathan?" said Vail, deftly interposing for Hugh's relief.

"Nothing bores me like big fish—excepting officious people," said Nata-

lie, turning upon her heel, and joining Mrs. Fortescue.

"Such a charming idea this of yours, Natalie, bringing us out to meet the fishermen," said Mrs. Fortescue. "I do so love nature, once in a good while. There should be a perfect view from the top of that highest rock yonder, if one could only get up there. Nothing like rocks and views for sharpening one's appetite. Come, baron, Mr. Vail, Mr. Godfrey; you shall all three escort me to that rock!"

"It is so beautiful here, I am loath to leave it," said Godfrey, starting from a reverie.

"Especially the food," said Vail.

"A little wind is blowing," went on the poet, now fully wound up to sustain his reputation. "Do you feel the little wind? The flower-bells are trembling on their stems. I do not know whether—I do not know whether—to laugh or to cry for joy!"

"Well, I can't wait till you make your mind up," observed Mrs. Fortescue, cruelly. "Come, baron; come, Mr. Vail!"

To her surprise, it was Sargent who was offering her his hand.

"Allow me to pilot you, Mrs. Fortescue."

She looked at him, blankly, then at Vail and the baron preceding them, and gave a half-glance back at Natalie and the beatific Godfrey.

"You really mean it? you, who are the last man in the world to play squire of dames?"

"Let me reform, now," said Sargent.

"Bless me, how civility becomes you!" answered Fair-and-Forty, with a laugh. "Very well, then; come on."

They had made but a few steps, leaving Natalie looking unutterable things at Godfrey—whom she alternately exalted as an apostle of certain creeds that she professed, and snubbed for an egregious bore—when Mrs. Fortescue discovered a sad loss.

"My pet handkerchief!" she exclaimed, feeling in her waist-band. "I remember having it a moment before we entered the glen."

"Shall I go back?" asked Sargent, conventionally.

"If it isn't too much trouble."

"Oh, no trouble," he said, departing down the castle path.

"Mr. Godfrey!" called Mrs. Fortescue, emphatically.

"Did you speak, Mrs. Fortescue?" said the apostle, arousing. "I heard nothing; I saw nothing, but this little, precious flower."

"Put the little, precious flower in your button-hole, and give me a hand up this rock."

Godfrey, obeying supinely, they joined Vail and de Lorme on the ascent of the rocks.

"Admirable! A *tour de force*!" said de Lorme, in Fair-and-Forty's ear.

"One must sacrifice one's self for one's friends," she murmured, aware, also, that she was sacrificing a brand-new pair of patent-leather shoes with wonderful high heels and "Old Strasse" buckles.

"Mrs. Hillyard will thus the longer forget the absence of Mr. Bobbee?" suggested the baron.

"Precisely," answered Mrs. Fortescue.

Natalie smiled subtly on Sargent, returning without the handkerchief.

"Well played, Hugh, well played!" she exclaimed.

"Did you really suppose—?" he began.

"Oh, let me suppose anything that comforts me," she interrupted. "It wouldn't be the first time you've thrown people off our tracks. You're not the only one who has to act a part."

"I am acting no part. I fully intended not to remain here alone with you, and I regret that I have to do so."

"There is no risk, as long as that impossible husband of mine is considerate enough to keep himself in town—but there's no time to be lost. Hugh, why had I no answer to my note?"

"Your note? Oh, yes, certainly, your note!" said Sargent, in what he felt to be a lame manner.

"Surely you read it?"

"Of course I did, but——"

"Perhaps you will give it back to me?"

"With pleasure," he answered, feeling in his breast-pocket. "I'm sorry; I must have left it in my evening coat."

"No matter," she said, angelically reproachful. "I fancy you did not notice the words, '*In memoriam*'?"

"Good heavens, Mrs. Hillyard, need we do this sort of thing in cold blood here?"

"Hugh! Your words pierce me like a knife! But I can and will bear all. It is my lot to suffer!" she exclaimed, tragically. "But, before you go from me to-night, I must have a final talk—I demand it—I entreat!"

"Please," said Sargent, looking around him, nervously, "please stand a little farther off."

"Yes? is it yes?" she persisted.

"If you must have it so," he answered, driven to bay.

"Very impassioned, really!" Natalie said, with a nervous laugh. "But I submit. Directly we separate after luncheon, do you go to the Round Tower on the hill, and I will follow. Then, as that is rather a damp and batty place, we can casually saunter back here where we are almost sure to be undisturbed."

"Upon one condition."

"And that?" she asked, shrugging.

"Is that until we return here, you will treat me in all respects like an ordinary acquaintance."

"Oh, certainly, Sir Hugh!" she said, the color coming into her face, and her eye flashing. "I shall begin by apologizing for having inflicted upon you, for so many days in succession, the bore of Sylvia Ridgeway's company. Of course, you understand that I am most anxious to have this affair between Vail and herself brought to a finish."

"Is there an affair?" he asked, indifferently.

"I wish Vail would once and for all drop the handkerchief, and let us have the fun of seeing her run as my *caniche* does, to pick it up."

Sargent restrained himself with difficulty. "Isn't that an unusually amiable wish for a guardian's wife?"

"Don't call me such horrid names! It's enough that I should have had this awkward creature thrust on my hands, and kept there—a spoil-sport, no doubt a spy, who reports me to 'Uncle Will.' Admit, Hugh, that the situation is one that calls for all my patience. Concede that I am quite justified in welcoming any circumstances that will rid me of her presence in my house."

"Any circumstances?" he said, looking at her, closely.

"Why, what do you mean?" she asked, and again the angry flush burnt her delicate face.

Sargent was saved the trouble of answering, by the return of the exploring party; Mrs. Fortescue, assisted by Vail, limping in, followed by the other two men, all looking mildly bored, as people do who are called on to survey the works of nature when disabled by lack of sustenance.

"Only think!" said Mrs. Fortescue; "one of my Louis-XV. heels got wrenched off on those horrid rocks, and the bill just came in, in this morning's post."

"But the view was magnificent!" said Vail.

"Was it? I never looked," answered Fair-and-Forty, with *sang-froid*.

"Sorry I failed to find your handkerchief, Mrs. Fortescue," said Sargent.

"Strangely enough, I had it in my blouse," she replied, giving him the faintest glance of meaning as she passed over to Natalie, and, slipping her arm in hers, said, in a loud whisper: "My dear, I hope you're grateful. The least you can do is to pay that shoemaker."

"Come, every one," said Natalie, crossly. "Sir Hugh says he is dying for his luncheon."

"So say we all of us," observed Vail, joining in a rapidly formed procession to the plateau that served as table, "excepting Godfrey, who never eats."

"Then it must be said, he acts very strangely with his knife and fork," said Sargent.

"The body—the earth-fed body—must submit to nutriment," remarked Godfrey, nearly falling over Mrs. Fortescue in his zeal to be seated; "while the soul—the spurning soul—takes wings to the empyrean."

"Beautiful! almost pure Maeterlinck," said Vail, applauding with two fingers.

"Baron, we'll take this end," said Natalie, placing herself where her flowerlike head leaned against the bole of a great tree, and trying to sign to Sargent to sit on the other side of her. But he lingered afar from the banquet, looking back into the wood.

"Who is it coming?" asked Natalie, impatiently.

A look of contempt came upon her face as Sylvia, again serene of countenance, bearing a great sheaf of wild flowers, was joined by Sargent and welcomed by Vail, who arose to meet and place her.

"Ridiculous! All this fuss about a mere Sylvia Ridgeway!" said Mrs. Fortescue. "But, my dear, I've news for you. It seems that this week, when you thought she was off with Vail, it's Sir Hugh with whom she has been thick as thieves—wading, fishing, talking, in the boat, on the shore—while poor Vail had to take up with Bobby. Clever girl, that! Deep, very deep!"

"Absurd!" said Natalie, curling her Cupid's bow of an upper lip.

"Certainly," said Mrs. Fortescue. "I always mistrust a girl who parts her hair in the middle."

Sylvia, leaving her two knights, came toward Natalie, offering her flowers.

"Have these? I'm sorry I'm late, but this is my excuse."

"Sit down, please," said Natalie, cuttingly, "and try not to make yourself any more conspicuous than you can help."

Sylvia's head became a little more erect; her eyes surveyed Natalie in full, but she did not speak in return. She walked deliberately over to the place Sargent and Vail were keeping for her between them, and, seating herself, talked to both men with animation.

"My word! but the young person is getting on," whispered Mrs. Fortescue to Natalie. "One must own she's improved by color."

"We are just remarking, Sylvia, how wretchedly you are sunburned," said Mrs. Hillyard.

"A slander!" exclaimed Sargent. "I put it to the men. Has Miss Ridgeway's complexion ever looked finer, more brilliant? All who agree with me will please say 'aye.'"

Vail, the baron and Godfrey all waved their napkins gallantly, crying, "Aye! aye! aye!"

"Please spare my blushes," said Sylvia, nodding her thanks very prettily.

"What did I tell you?" said Fair-and-Forty, to Mrs. Hillyard. "If my Maudie had such forward ways, I'd put her back in the nursery."

"Oh, Mr. Godfrey!" Sylvia hurried on to say, to cover her embarrassment at the women's spiteful whispering; "I owe you an apology for breaking my engagement to take you to see the gilliflowers in the keeper's garden."

"I thought Godfrey made it a point never to do anything between meals," said Vail, innocently. "Don't mind those gossips," he added, in Sylvia's ear. "We're here to see that you have fair play."

"Another time it might be easier, but to-day—" said Sylvia, showing the strain she was under.

"You aren't a bit yourself. What has happened? Surely I can help."

"Presently—when we are alone. If this luncheon were only over!"

"When is your new volume to be published, Mr. Godfrey?" asked Mrs. Fortescue, of the poet.

"Madame, I do not publish," said Godfrey, between two mouthfuls of galantine. "My words—my printed words—go forth like seedlings from the bosom of the flower to those who will comprehend me." And he helped himself largely to aspic.

"Editions strictly limited," commented Vail.

"Your things are rather exasperating, Mr. Godfrey," said Mrs. Fortescue.

"Just as one thinks one is coming to something improper, one can't understand a word. Here's the captain, but where are our naughty children?"

O'Rourke, breathless and heated, came into the glen in quite the opposite direction from that in which he had set forth upon his quest.

"Faith, I've rescued the innocents!" he said, reporting to Mrs. Fortescue. "Found 'em safe and sound, ma'am, but not where ye sent me lookin'."

"How kind you are, you dear man! Do sit down and eat a tremendous luncheon," said the lady, whose purpose had been secured.

All eyes turned to the quarter in which now slowly appeared the figure of Bobby, escorting a damsel too visibly his senior, and pathetically anxious to let herself down to his youthful level.

"Robert," said Mrs. Hillyard, with distinct displeasure in her tones, "what have you been about? You might have remembered that in your father's absence you are host."

Bobby, looking cheerful always, seized a large dish, and carried it around the circle, requesting everybody to partake of his own prime favorite, a pigeon pasty. To the other delinquent, Mrs. Fortescue addressed herself, coldly:

"Maudie!"

"Yes, mama," said the excellent Maudie.

"I shall have something to say to you when we get back."

Maudie, who well knew that this "something" would prove a rigorous inquiry into just how far she had been able to entice her victim along the straight and narrow path leading to a proposal, contented herself with meekly repeating, "Yes, mama." Then, seating herself beside Godfrey, who had just begun upon a portion of Bobby's pie, she remained in a pensive and appealing attitude, gazing at a sandwich on her plate.

"Faith, I hope you bear me no malice, Miss Fortescue," said the good-natured O'Rourke, searching among the bottles laid in the moss beside her.

"Oh, no!" she answered, loftily. "How could mere vulgar curiosity expect to fathom the communion of kindred spirits?"

"Bedad, it's not kindred spirits I'm after, now!" he said, beamingly, proceeding to mix himself a drink. "A wee drop with some apollinaris, Miss Maudie, to prove there's no bad blood betwixt us? No? Then, I'll go bail your mother'll not be so cruel."

Mrs. Fortescue, proving less than remonstrant to his proposition, they were soon tippling together in amity.

"Here's to the hair off your head, ma'am!" said the captain, glass in hand.

"Eh? what?" exclaimed Maudie's mama, clapping both hands to her elaborate coiffure; "why, you horrid man!" she ended, suddenly. "Maudie, love!"

"Yes, mama."

"Cover your foot, dear child."

Maudie obediently drew in the foot which Vail called her best feature—but not until every one present had had a good chance to look at it, and Bobby returned to renew his devotion at her side.

Sylvia, meanwhile, had tried to elude Vail's questionings, but ended by telling him enough of the cause of her alarm to make him, too, thoroughly uncomfortable as to the possible outcome of Mr. Hillyard's return. They agreed to take counsel upon the subject so soon as luncheon should be at an end, and Sylvia, in spite of herself, breathed free.

"Dear me, I'm forgetting my sister-in-law!" exclaimed Mrs. Hillyard. "She should be somewhere. Has any one chanced to see a quite too terrible old person from the States, straying about the woods—a reformer who writes pamphlets, and lives on little pills?"

Bobby turned upon his stepmother with surprising dignity.

"It's all right about my aunt, Natalie," said he. "Sylvia and I have looked out for her."

"Sylvia—always Sylvia!" muttered Natalie, stung by the boy's rebuke.

"Oh, Bobby, there she comes, now!" cried Sylvia, springing to the rencounter of Miss Lucretia, who, wearing her most uncompromising aspect, now came swinging through the wood.

Bobby ran after Sylvia, Maudie tittered, the men looked on in discreet silence, while Mrs. Fortescue breathed her heartfelt sympathy to Natalie.

"Is that she? Oh, you poor dear!"

"Nobody shall say I have failed in my duty to my husband's nearest relatives," said Mrs. Hillyard, quailing inwardly. "Besides, she's richer than William, and hasn't made a will."

"Oh, you do have the luck!" Mrs. Fortescue rejoined, plaintively, and, to be frank, begrudgingly.

Natalie, without moving from her place, stretched out her pink-tipped hand to the large lady, who had, by now, come up to them.

"How d'ye do! Hot, isn't it?" she drawled.

"Humph!" said Miss Lucretia, turning upon her the awful glare of her glasses; "so you're William's wife? Humph!"

"William will be so awfully sorry he wasn't here to meet you. When did you come over? Hope they've made you comfortable. If they haven't, pray mention it to my maid."

And thus exhausting her resources of hospitality, Mrs. Hillyard opened a large, white-frilled parasol, and, putting it between her cheek and an aggressive sunbeam, fell back into conversation with de Lorme.

"Now, aunt, what'll you take?" said Bobby, seating the speechless spinster on a log, and providing her with a napkin. As each gentleman in turn proffered a dish of some kind, Miss Lucretia surveyed him narrowly; but her astonishment at the apparition of the languorous Godfrey was expressed by an emphatic exclamation, decidedly to the embarrassment of lookers-on. With more than her former brusquerie, she declined all refreshment save the solace of a tabloid taken from a bag hanging at her waist.

Mrs. Fortescue, availing herself of

the first opportunity, went over to the old lady, and observed, purringly:

"I see you are surprised at Natalie's poor manners. Don't mind her. If you want anything always come to me."

"Humph!" said Miss Lucretia.

"You can't think how interested I am in your work—your writings. We must be sister spirits," pursued Fair-and-Forty.

"God forbid!" answered Miss Lucretia, heartily.

"Here! I notice you looking at Bobby and my girl. Poor children! theirs is the most romantic of attachments. His father refuses him all but the bare necessities of his station. Dear boy! So sad to see him wasting his young life in a hopeless passion, when even a modest income, assured to them, and the prospect of more, hereafter, might enable them to marry."

"Humph!" said Miss Lucretia.

"Of course, you won't say I mentioned it to you," said Mrs. Fortescue, discomfited.

"No," answered Aunt Loo, emphatically. "But I will send you my leaflet upon the growing prevalence of child-stealing in high society."

With a grunt, she arose and went over to the spring, whither Sylvia had gone to fetch her a glass of water, and where Sargent had followed Sylvia.

"Who's that one, child?" asked Miss Hillyard, as Sargent lifted his cap and left them together. "I like him, and yet I don't like to see him with you."

"It's Sir Hugh Sargent, aunty. Why don't you like to see him with me?" asked Sylvia, blushing, despite herself.

"Because of the cat's eyes watching you! Sylvia, this is no place for either you or me. By the way, I met William in the woods."

"Did you? Oh, how glad I am! You must have cheered him, dear aunty."

"I don't know. Of course, being aware of his peculiarities, I treated him with tact. In the first place, I told him he had nobody but himself

to thank for the mess he has made of his ridiculous second marriage."

"That wasn't all you said?"

"H'm—no. I told him it was notorious the girl had married him for his money. Then I added, incidentally, that he is as gray as a badger, and as yellow as a pumpkin. When I saw he wasn't taking my sisterly admonitions in good part, I reminded him that he could never keep his temper. What should he do, but bolt off in the rudest way, and leave me talking!"

"Oh, aunty!" said Sylvia, despairingly; then, she tried to check herself. "Poor Uncle Will is greatly tried to-day. To-morrow, things will go better between you."

"To-morrow I'll be on my way to London," said Miss Hillyard, with a snort. "Saturday, I sail."

"Not so soon, aunty? Think of Bobby."

"Don't speak of him. I've done with the boy! Look at him, gone over body and boots to that detestable, old, painted sham! No, my dear, I'm rubbed the wrong way; the whole thing is a disappointment. Come away with me to America!"

"Aunty Loo!" exclaimed Sylvia, startled exceedingly.

"Don't answer me back! I can't abide being answered back. Will you come with me or not?"

"Dear aunty, you are so good, but I really can't say anything so suddenly," answered the bewildered girl.

"Very well, then, you know what my asking you means. You'd be my child, and get all I have to leave. But there, you won't, and I wash my hands of you."

"No—no, aunty! Only give me time!" gasped Sylvia.

"Till nine A.M. to-morrow, then," said Miss Loo, as if ordering home a parcel.

"How good you are to want me!"

"Rubbish! Till nine A.M. to-morrow. Now, child, I'm going in, and try to forget this menagerie kept by William's wife. Don't follow! I can't abide being followed."

She made a stride forward, then turned back, with a pleading gaze.

"Sylvia, don't disappoint me!"

Directly afterward, she was marching away, ignoring Bobby, who ran after her, and refusing to notice Natalie, now a little scared at the result of her own behavior.

"I say, Sylvia, this is too bad, you know!" remarked Bobby. "I was doing all I could."

"Don't mind her, dear," answered Sylvia, gently.

"Really, Miss Ridgeway," observed Natalie, who had arisen, her example followed by everybody but Godfrey, whom they left eating, "I owe you thanks for your kind assistance in assuming the hostess in my place. Another time, however, please remember that when I require you to play so prominent a rôle in my household, I shall have no hesitation in demanding it. Until then, wouldn't it be more becoming for you to keep a little—a very little—in the back-ground?"

Sargent, who heard the beginning of this amiable harangue, had taken himself out of hearing; but Vail stood by Sylvia, with indignant eyes.

"I shall not forget," said Sylvia, haughtily.

"See that you do not!" answered Natalie. "Now, as every one has finished, I think we may leave this place to the servants, and scatter, each one where he likes to go. Mr. Godfrey, will you come?"

Godfrey, rising reluctantly, was carried off by her. Mrs. Fortescue, with de Lorme and O'Rourke, lingered a moment by the spring, while the playful Maudie, having discovered a pendent grape-vine, insisted that Bobby should swing her; Vail kept by Sylvia, who was giving a few directions to the footman about packing up the remnants of the feast.

"Brave Sylvia!" Vail said, in an undertone.

"You see, I'm without defense," she answered, smiling rather forlornly.

"Not if you'll give me the right to meet insult for you."

"No, Kit, dear Kit!" she said, gratefully.

"Never?"

"Never. You're not angry?"

"No—only sorry. Sylvia, if I mayn't make your happiness, it is borne in on me that some day I may have a chance to preserve it. Count on me when that day comes."

"Thank you, Kit," she said, and smiled brightly in his face.

"Now, what can I do to calm this alarm you've worked up about your guardian?" said Vail, again his cheerful self.

"Follow Sir Hugh. Keep him in sight, as I shall Natalie."

"To please you—but I can't believe—"

"Do believe me! Follow Sir Hugh! He and my uncle must not meet to-day!"

"All right," said Vail, looking with concern at her perturbed face. "Hugh's not had time to get far away. I never saw you so broken up."

"So long as I know my poor uncle is not himself—that he's wandering, perhaps lurking, near us, how can I breathe free? Hurry, Kit!"

"Here goes, then—to please you," said Vail, inclined to smile at what he believed superfluous intensity.

He hastened off, and Sylvia, with a sense of relief, went her own way in pursuit of Natalie and Godfrey. Mrs. Fortescue, who had been watching her interview with Vail, shrugged her shoulders, and smiled, knowingly.

"I may be wrong, but it seems to me there's moral thunder in the air."

"*Mon Dieu, madame*," observed de Lorme, "what could be more natural? Have we not all the elements of the usual tragedy at hand?"

"Who'll give me a cigarette?" asked the lady, selecting one to her taste from the baron's case, immediately proffered to her.

"'Tis puzzlin' me mightily, I'll swear," said O'Rourke, puffing at his cigar, "to know just how the land lies between our fair hostess and Sir Hugh."

Mrs. Fortescue glanced over at

Bobby, who was swinging Maud, within earshot.

"Maudie, love!"

"Yes, mama."

"Didn't you ask me if Mr. Robert mightn't punt you across the lake to the island?"

"That was yesterday, mama," said Maudie, modestly.

"So it was. How stupid of me!"

"Oh, please, Mrs. Fortescue, mightn't she come again?" asked Bobby, with a delighted face.

"Teasing children!" said the lady, in fond rebuke; "only this once, then. Take good care of my girl, Mr. Hillyard!"

"Trust me, Mrs. Fortescue!" was the proud answer. And, in a flutter of excitement, the shy Maudie allowed herself to be assisted from the swing, and conveyed away from maternal supervision.

"It is so good to have a daughter one can trust," remarked Mrs. Fortescue, with matchless readiness.

"With an heir presumptive!" said O'Rourke, aside, to the baron, who, in return, lifted his right eyebrow understandingly.

While this by-play was in progress, none of its participants was in the least aware that they had been seen and heard by the master of the house, who, upon intercepting the servants on their way back to the castle with the hampers, had informed himself of the movements of the party.

It was not a pleasant face to look upon that now and again peered uncertainly from the deep covert of the woods, then withdrew from observation of his wife's guests in discussion of her affairs.

"Now that we can talk undisturbed," said Mrs. Fortescue, in a comfortable tone, "did you ever see anything like Natalie's face, while Sargent kept sitting in Sylvia's pocket, during luncheon?"

"*Pauvre belle dame!* May she be soon consoled!" said the baron, lightly.

"I declare, I've no patience with her," went on the lady. "Why

doesn't a woman know when she's well off?"

"You would say, when she is blest with the love and confidence of so excellent a husband," observed the baron.

Mrs. Fortescue laughed. "Hardly! Just think of it—to be young, pretty, with all the clothes one wants, and all the cash; to have a town-house, a country-house, a perfect digestion, and a husband who spends most of his time in the city—now, what in the world has she got to do bothering with love?"

"It's not love I'd be callin' it, Mrs. Forty," said O'Rourke. "'Tis the twentieth-century substitute! Bedad, if 'twas meself choosin', I'd ask for the old-fashioned, common or Garden-of-Eden article."

"Of course, there's the drawback that her wooden image of a husband's still madly in love with her," added Mrs. Fortescue, with unaffected commiseration in her tones.

"At Hillyard's age, more dangerous than your English gout! What do you say to going back to the castle for another little game of bridge?"

"Capital!" she answered, with animation; "but, whatever comes of this mixed-up business of Natalie's, it will always be a comfort to me to know that I've done my best for her. I've said everything I know to dissuade her from throwing away substantial assets like hers, in the very worst speculation known to woman. But she is nothing if not self-willed. She thinks Sargent belongs to her. She has no marriage-settlement, and I know what a wretched allowance the divorce courts give the wife."

Laughing together, the three sauntered off toward the castle, leaving Hillyard to his pleasant reflections in leafy solitude. Coming out from behind his screen of low-hanging boughs, the poor man stood at first uncertain, his face dark with wrath and desire for vengeance.

Thus, Sylvia, returning from her vain search after Natalie, found her uncle, and, to her dismay, was

detained by him forcibly upon the spot. Possessed by the one idea of satisfying himself definitely as to the purpose of his wife's meeting with Sargent, Hillyard was not to be diverted from the resolve to watch them from his hiding-place already tested. All in vain were Sylvia's pleadings. His hand, closing upon her wrist, she was forced into retreat behind the trees, and there held, as a witness in case of need.

That things had progressed so far toward an inevitable crash, filled Sylvia with grief and astonishment. But, through all, her faith in Sargent did not waver. She *knew* he would come out of it unscathed. But that did not prevent her realizing that the events of the day were somehow hurrying her to a crisis, and the outcome seemed inevitable, so far as departure from her guardian's home was in question. She must go, and in all the mists of her distress Miss Hillyard's offer arose as a light leading her to deliverance. These thoughts chased one another through her mind rapidly in the brief time while she stood with a beating heart, her guardian's grasp of iron upon her wrist, not venturing to look into his darkling, distorted face.

The ordeal was fortunately short. The two people they awaited came strolling together along the path from the Round Tower. A glance showed that Natalie was vexed, disappointed, trying to carry matters off with a high hand, while Sargent looked as Sylvia had never seen him, hard and cynical. To Sylvia's immediate relief, they placed themselves where their voices came but imperfectly to listening ears.

Natalie, on her side, had just cause for perturbation. Never had she so poignantly realized that her power—or what passed for it—over Sargent, had become a thing of naught. In comparison with his present manner toward her, even the high-flown homage of Godfrey, who, in secret, made her the heroine of his writings, was acceptable. But she was still sufficiently mistress of herself to put

spirit into her voice when she led her unwilling captive to the place of rendezvous.

"Rather clever, this flank movement of ours from the Round Tower. And how shockingly I treated poor Godfrey in order to join you there!" she said.

"Would you mind speaking lower?" he answered, uneasily.

"This whole day—your last day with me, Hugh—has been such a wretched disappointment, one long ordeal," she said, dropping her voice.

"After to-day, you will not have that to complain of," he said, in a listless tone.

"This friendship with you," exclaimed Natalie, with intensity, "so high, so sublimated, so much better than other people's loves—which, no matter how it has been misjudged, has been for us so long the high, guiding star of our two lives—how miserably, and, I must say, flatly, it seems to be ending!"

"Everything in this world has to end," he said. "Things haven't gone so smoothly between us, of late, that we sha'n't be better for any change."

"Oh, Hugh!"

"For heaven's sake, don't cry!" he exclaimed, in new alarm.

"What is left me, if you are brutal?" she answered, tragically.

"I'll swear, Mrs. Hillyard, I did not come here for this. And, unless you stop it, I'll leave you without the smallest compunction," he said, his anger roused, and he started to put his threat into execution.

Natalie followed him out into the open glade, near where her husband stood with his hot eyes fixed upon her face. She stood with her back to Hillyard, and spoke where he could now hear her every word.

"Oh, very well, then!" she said, curtly. "Not to delay you, I'll condense what I had to say. It chiefly concerns your behavior with Sylvia Ridgeway. You men of the world think you've a right to amuse yourselves plucking flowers of sentiment all along your way in life—even when you

find them in an Irish bog. But you cannot suppose I shall permit this to go on in *my* house."

Sargent's miserably roving eye caught sight, at this moment, of Hillyard behind the thicket. To warn Natalie of her husband's presence, he drew near her, quickly, and spoke in a strained whisper.

"Take care! Don't turn! Your husband's behind you, listening!"

Natalie, at last in receipt of the great emotion she had always craved in life, was for a moment completely unnerved and terrified. Gasping, she stood with white cheeks and lips that could not frame a syllable. Then, by an immense effort at self-control, she rose to the occasion, and went on, speaking louder and with distinct utterance.

"You cannot, I say, suppose that I will allow this to continue in *my* house; that, in my dear husband's absence, I could let you go on trifling with the child he has taken under his charge, whom he loves like his very own?"

"Oh, this is horrible!" muttered Sargent, but he could not silence her.

"I see you resent my interference," Natalie went on. "Perhaps you are right; perhaps I am wrong. But I acted upon the impulse that has always governed me. Go away, if you must, to-night, Sir Hugh Sargent, but before you go, in honor let that poor girl understand that her silly hopes are vain."

Sylvia, wrenching herself from her guardian's relaxing grasp, fled silently into the forest. Hillyard, his face parting with its somber fixity, held back, yet a moment, before revealing himself.

"It is not one, but two people whom you are insulting, Mrs. Hillyard," Sargent began, indignantly; but she held up her hand to check him.

"Old friends though we are, Sir Hugh, and you in my husband's confidence, I call it a cruel act on your part to have done this wrong to a girl who may be awkward and ignorant,

but, while I am here, shall never be defenseless."

"Well said, Natalie! well spoken, little wife!" cried Hillyard, in a voice of triumph.

As he came out toward them, Natalie, with a cry of astonishment, flew into his arms.

"Will, dearest!" she cried. "Now I can be at rest!"

"And has Sir Hugh Sargent, the polished courtier, the invader of weak women's hearts, no answer ready for my wife?" said Hillyard, as he stood with one arm encircling Natalie, she nestling to his side.

"For Mrs. Hillyard, absolutely none," answered Sargent, with knit brows. "Of you, Mr. Hillyard, I have the honor to ask the hand of your ward in marriage."

Natalie uttered a faint cry.

"You seem overcome," said Hillyard, quickly turning upon her.

"Who wouldn't be," said Natalie, with another strong effort, "after such a scene with an old friend, and with the climax of such a surprise as you have given me, dear?"

"Mr. Hillyard," said Sargent, with dignity, "nothing I can say now can remove from any one of us the pain of what has gone before. But of one thing I am distinctly sure—that, with all my heart, I ask Sylvia to be my wife."

"Do you advise me to give him an answer now?" said Hillyard, with a half-chuckle, turning to his wife.

Natalie's voice could not, in spite of her, ring true as she answered this.

"I? Why, of course. What have I to say to it, now you are here?"

Again, suspicion, never far absent, settled upon Hillyard's soul.

"Only that, before giving my sanction to the match, I exact yours," he said, harshly, his gaze searching her face.

"I—I consent, certainly. Why shouldn't I?" she answered, and Hugh saw that she was trembling with fear. "Sir Hugh, I can only hope that your married experience may be—as happy and congenial as—our own."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hillyard," he said, loathing the scene, and eager to cut it short. The last taunt had destroyed in him any pity he might have had for the beautiful, small creature's humiliation. It seemed to him that a woman like that must always be sufficient unto herself.

"Dearest, I've a splitting headache—take me home," said Natalie, laying one hand on her husband's shoulder.

"All right, dear little woman," the man answered, beaming with new pride. "We'll leave you, Sir Hugh, regretting any annoyance you may have had from a misapprehension of your courtship. I've no doubt you'll find Sylvia hiding somewhere near. She's a great deal to forgive me, but she'll do it, Sargent. She has a big soul, that girl—like that dear chap, her father. Our room will be better than our company, eh, Natalie? We've been through this ourselves, haven't we, pretty one? Good-bye for the present, then, Sir Hugh. See you at dinner, if not before. I hope Sylvia will persuade you to stay on. Come, Natalie. Off we go!"

He put his heavy hand upon her arm, and Natalie moved away in silent misery and shame. When about to pass out of his sight, she looked back at Hugh, beseechingly, but he remained motionless where she had left him, his eyes fixed on the ground.

One moment he stood alone; then, Sylvia, pale and unhappy, her cheeks marked with tears, returned to his side with an impetuous rush.

"Good-bye, Sir Hugh," she said. "Because you've been what you have to me, because I promised to trust you utterly, I've come back. When I heard what Natalie said, I was so ashamed, I wanted to run and run, and never stop—never see you again, or any one here. As it is, I am going soon—to-morrow. I'm going to America with Miss Hillyard. After to-day, you won't see or hear of me, but even the humiliation of this moment can't undo the past. And so, at least, I hope we may part friends?"

To this point, she had kept up bravely, her broken words stabbing his

heart with sorrow for what he had brought upon her. But, when sobs—great, honest sobs—of a loving creature in distress—overpowered all further attempts at speech, he felt that he had kept silent long enough.

"Sylvia," he said, with grave tenderness, "there are lots of things I might say to you just now, but there's only one I want to say. Remember, it's the man with a clear brain and wide-open eyes, steering his own way through a tossing sea, who says it—I love you, Sylvia, love you, love you! For months, you have filled my thoughts and swayed my fancy. Come to me, Sylvia. Be my wife!"

To Sylvia, life seemed suddenly flooded with refulgent light. She trembled, could not believe her ears, looked up at him, bewildered.

"I? Oh, how can I?" she asked, artlessly.

"Nothing easier," said Sargent, putting his arm about her, with a smile. "Begin this way."

He kissed her, and in that moment all the dark things of life seemed to take flight from both of them out of the wood.

III

THE nine days' wonder of Sir Hugh Sargent's marriage with an obscure Miss Ridgeway, whose guardian had given her a quiet wedding-breakfast at his house in town, after which the couple had left immediately for the Continent to spend the Winter, was revived by the Sargents' return to Chelwood in the Spring.

Some curiosity had been engendered among Sir Hugh's friends by a story that the bride, in accepting him, had forfeited an offer of adoption and a large inheritance from a queer old spinster. But this was balanced by the suggestion that, had she remained single, she must have gone to live in America as manager of a health cure. There was some desire among a few people to see the new Lady Sargent, but more to know how Natalie Hillyard and Sir Hugh would behave to-

ward each other under the new conditions. For, recently, there had been floating around the society of idlers who feed their minds upon petty personalities a new version of the causes that led to Sir Hugh's rather sudden marriage. Where it came from, who was responsible for its details, nobody was prepared to say.

Mrs. Fortescue, whom, naturally, everybody felt could tell everything, was virtuously indignant when called upon to discuss her dearest friend's intimate affairs. She also pooh-poohed the rumor that Natalie, in temporary need of a new interest, had, during some months, accepted the attenuated devotion of Godfrey, of which she was by this time heartily tired.

Now that Sir Hugh was back again, that he was probably in need of congenial companionship, and that, coincidentally, William Hillyard had departed for a three months' absence on business in the land of the Stars and Stripes, there seemed little reason to doubt that the things curious people wanted to know would, in the course of time, divulge themselves.

The Sargents, meantime, who had settled down at Chelwood Park, in glorious indifference to the chatter of their acquaintances, believed themselves immune from any necessity of stirring up society by giving or receiving invitations.

Sylvia and Hugh had decided this point between them, in the first days after their joyous establishment at home. Three people only did they elect to receive as visitors—Kit Vail, who came to them promptly, always his kind and cheery self; Bobby, whom they desired to watch over during this interim when it was believed that Miss Fortescue had relaxed her pursuit of him, owing to his father's flat refusal of consent to their marriage; and last, but in no way least, Auntie Loo, who had voyaged over sea to spend a week under their roof.

Chelwood Park and its wondrous gardens were radiant in bloom, and a full moon was impending in the heavens, when the change in the situation came.

In her usual meteoric fashion, Natalie Hillyard, accompanied by O'Rourke and de Lorme, appeared one morning in time for luncheon, announcing, with perfect ease, that she had determined to give dear Hugh and Sylvia a charming surprise that evening, in order to extract them from the lover's solitude, too long maintained. The idea had occurred to her to ask a lot of people down to a dance by moonlight in the grounds, with electricity, of course, to help out the moon's deficiencies, and costumes, or dominoes, *de rigueur*.

Before Sylvia, who had cordially hoped to be left out of Mrs. Hillyard's consideration in her married life, as in the past, could recover from the stupor of this invasion and announcement, she saw, to her chagrin, that her husband, however much it displeased him, had no intention of shirking the duties of hospitality thus thrust upon him. It was the first cloud on the heaven of her married life; but it was a considerable one, and, for a time, seemed to spread from pole to pole.

Natalie, exquisitely pretty, no trace upon her sea-shell cheek or brow of care or penitence, thoroughly enjoyed the excitement she had produced. She made a feint of assuring Sylvia that she need feel no anxiety, as even the smallest arrangements for the evening had been made by her. As they spoke, an army of workmen and caterers descended upon the place.

With her old, superb insolence, Natalie assumed supreme charge of the affair. Sylvia felt herself routed, pushed to the wall. Too proud to appeal to Hugh for sympathy, or to let any one else know that she needed it, she submitted with what grace she could. And so, the day dragged on, until an afternoon train to their nearest station brought the next relay of unbidden guests, in the persons of Mrs. Fortescue and Maudie, to whom the butler, while introducing them into the hall in the absence of the family, gave such information as was deemed desirable by the invader in making her usual *reconnaissance du pays*.

"I'll wait here a bit, Hallett," said

Mrs. Fortescue, in whose employ the new Chelwood butler had been, some years before. "Quite as it all looked in Sir Hugh's unmarried days! Hard to realize there's a Lady Sargent now."

"Yes, madam. Her ladyship insisted there should be no change for her."

"Very proper, considering what she was," said the lady, her roving gaze resting, for a moment, upon her daughter, whom their maid and bags were preceding up the stairs. "No, don't go up yet, Maudie. Mr. Robert Hillyard is staying here, I believe, Hallett?"

"Yes, madam, Mr. Robert and his aunt, Miss Hillyard—a very determined lady. She took to her motor-car and left us for town, directly Mrs. Hillyard and her friends arrived this morning. Mr. Vail's also stopping with us, madam."

"I suppose you don't know where Mr. Robert might chance to be, Hallett?" said Mrs. Fortescue, a genial sparkle in her maternal eye.

Hallett looked discreet.

"Mr. Robert was in the billiard-room, a moment since, madam, knocking the balls about, by himself."

"Maudie, love," went on the lady, in a dreamy way, as if she had not heard his answer, "you have never seen this beautiful old house of Sir Hugh's. There'll be time before tea for you to take a look about. The—er—billiard-room, down at the end of the corridor, has a particularly fine ceiling."

"Oh, I should love to see that ceiling, dear mama!" exclaimed Maudie, hastily tripping in the direction indicated.

The faintest adumbration of a smile came upon Hallett's shorn countenance. Mrs. Fortescue, espying it, turned on him a hard, cold, unrelenting face, and spoke with a voice to match.

"I presume you have hardly forgotten the circumstances of your leaving my service, Hallett? How I—let you off—from a term of years in jail."

"Hardly, Mrs. Fortescue," the man said, with smooth humility. "But I had hoped my humble offices as a

witness in your divorce suit would even matters between us."

"Whatever you've done for me, man, has been well paid for. And be sure, my keeping your secrets will continue only just so long as you continue useful—and *endurable* to me."

"I understand, madam," he said, cringing. "I hope the last batch of Mayfair personals I collected at the Butlers' Club was satisfactory? Believe me, Mrs. Fortescue, our literary partnership is to me a source of honest pride."

"Hallett, you are impertinent. Wait! I've a question or two to ask. First, where is Sir Hugh?"

"Sir Hugh and Mrs. Hillyard are in the rose-garden, ma'am, arranging for to-night," he said, with a meaning smirk.

"And Miss Ridgeway? I should say Lady Sargent, only it seems so perfectly absurd."

"In her own rooms, ma'am."

"Sulking?"

"Oh, madam!" exclaimed the butler, sentimentally. "Picture a young couple but recently settled down in their ancestral halls, after months spent in roving beneath the cloudless skies of Italy and France and Egypt——!"

"Hallett, don't be poetical!"

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but since I became a literary man——" ventured Hallett.

"A literary idiot!" interrupted Mrs. Fortescue. "The point is that since Mrs. Hillyard arrived this morning——"

"With her gentlemen friends, madam——"

"Don't say, 'gentlemen friends,' Hallett. It is simply impossible. Lady Sargent has not had sense enough to hide her foolish jealousy. A nice beginning, upon my word!"

"But consider, Mrs. Fortescue. My lady's but a young bride, and this entertainment has dropped upon her like a bolt from the blue. Wot more natural?"

"Spare me reflections, Hallett. I always skip them in a book," said his

late employer, abstractedly. She was thinking whether it was worth her while to meet Sylvia as a sympathizer.

"Sir Hugh has acted in all respects like a man of the world," went on the critic of high society from within. "He give in to Mrs. Hillyard's plans at once. Our whole house and grounds are now in the hands of Sprightly's men—the incomparable Sprightly, who turns you off a wedding or a funeral with equal alacrity. The affair, particularly the Dresden-china minuet, to be danced under different colored lights on the old bowling-green, will be a scene from fairy-land."

"Sir Hugh, naturally, has spent most of the day in Mrs. Hillyard's company?" asked Mrs. Fortescue.

"Yes, madam," smirked Hallett. "You know her imperious ways—but queenly, I call her, decidedly queenly. She ordering Sir Hugh here, there, everywhere, an' he follerin'!"

"And Lady Sargent went under at the first shot? Incredible!" mused Mrs. Fortescue.

"A headache, her la'ship's maid calls it. One of the privileges of aristocracy, a headache is, Mrs. Fortescue. My own impression is that her la'ship has probably been havin' a good cry!"

"Man, your impressions and reflections will put me in my grave!"

"Comes so natural to me, since I went into literature," answered Hallett, simpering. "But one word more for my lady, I'd like to say. She appeals to me, that young woman does. Consider her youth and inexperience! Till now, the couple has been like love birds on their perch—Sir Hugh, apparently, givin' no thoughts to his former life, an' she—blissful! But such is life! It is the common saying below-stairs, to-day, that this is the little rift within the lute!"

"Hallett, you *are* a donkey!"

"Certainly, ma'am. Only, I thought as, us both bein' authors, you might appreciate an apt quotation."

Christopher Vail, at this moment issuing from his stronghold in the library, an ancient tome in hand, advanced upon the pair, the deep dis-

taste in his honest face leaving Mrs. Fortescue no doubt as to the welcome she had from him.

"How d'ye do, dear Mr. Vail!" she said, offering her hand.

"How d'ye do!" he answered, without taking it. "Tea'll be served here, Hallett?"

"Yes, sir; almost immediately, sir," answered Hallett, resuming his manner of every-day office, and going over to the fireplace to unfold a tea-table.

"So nice to see you here," went on Mrs. Fortescue. "You, it appears, were the first outsider in the bridal paradise. I hope you don't mean to play the serpent, Mr. Vail?"

"Not when the rôle can be so much better filled by a lady, Mrs. Fortescue," he responded, brusquely.

Mrs. Fortescue's chagrin was masked by the entrance, from without, of Natalie with three supporters, namely, Sir Hugh, O'Rourke and de Lorme. The beauty was in high feather, and Fort's intelligent eye at once perceived that success had perched upon her banners. She greeted her friend with her customary nonchalant good-fellowship, casually observed to Sir Hugh that she had forgotten to speak to him of Mrs. Fortescue's coming, but had given instructions to the housekeeper; and ended by going over to take possession of the tea-table which Hallett and a footman had, by now, spread with a variety of tempting, small dainties, as well as the silver tea-kettle and its equipments.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Hillyard," Sir Hugh said, somewhat formally, approaching her, "but my wife should be coming down."

"Don't bother about Sylvia," said Natalie, indifferently. "Her maid tells me she's a rippin' headache, and mayn't come down-stairs to-day."

"Then I'll go to her," he said, looking anxious.

"Oh, but her maid told mine she had locked her door, and given orders she was not to be disturbed by any one—*any one*, Sir Hugh. Under those circumstances, don't you think you

had better bide your time? Please hand this cup to Forty, and come back for your own."

Sir Hugh, suppressing his impatience as best he could, complied with her request, and Natalie turned to Hallett, who, having dismissed his myrmidon, was himself about to withdraw.

"By the way, Hallett, we sha'n't want a regular dinner, you know. Give us a scratch affair in the veranda—hot soup, cold things in aspic, and plenty of fizz, at eight-thirty, sharp. Really, it's as if the weather had been made to my order—warm and bright as Midsummer. No sugar in yours, Hugh, and a slice of lemon? Forty, our frocks for the minuet have come. Dreams, perfect dreams! As soon as I decided to have this thing, I invited Lady Clanberry to be one of my dancers, and then went to give her shop the order. Not only is she coming, but she made her girls rush the order, and you know how she disappoints."

Hallett lingered at Sir Hugh's elbow.

"It's all right, Sir Hugh, about the dinner?"

"What do you mean, 'about the dinner'?" said his master, shortly.

"The order give' me by Mrs. Hillyard, Sir Hugh. Wouldn't you wish me to speak first to her ladyship?"

"No; do not disturb her ladyship."

Hallett vanished, and Vail, who had reluctantly taken his tea from Natalie's hand, and was drinking it standing, went up to Sargent, anxiously.

"Is Sylvia really not well?" he asked.

"Quite well," said Sir Hugh, in an annoyed tone; and, rising, he went into the library.

"It's too bad we're deprived of her charming ladyship," observed the gallant O'Rourke.

"It's my belief," said Natalie, "the girl's so rattled by the idea of having to play hostess, she'll never summon courage to come down-stairs."

"Fancy a Lady Sargent afraid to come down-stairs!" commented Fair-

and-Forty, hilariously, attacking another cucumber sandwich.

"Naturally, any function of good society would intimidate a raw, half-bred girl like that," went on Mrs. Hillyard, amiably conscious of annoying Vail.

"Faith, raw she may be," exclaimed O'Rourke, "but wherever the fair Sylvia stands, she's a thoroughbred, every inch of her!"

"In my opinion," Vail added, with deliberation, "after meeting the test put to her tact and good breeding to-day, Lady Sargent will, in future, be proof against any further ordeal—whether of good or of bad society!" And, setting down his tea-cup, he took his hat from a rack by the door, and went out into the grounds.

"Boorish fellow!" said Natalie, with a little hunch of her pretty shoulders. "Rather soon for the lover to come on the scene, even in France, eh, baron?"

"*Ma foi, madame*, in England he is always on the scene; in France, he has the grace to remain sometimes behind the door."

"I wonder where Sir Hugh went?" exclaimed Natalie, always as restless as a bird upon a bough. "I quite forgot something important about the electric lights."

She ran across the hall, and went into the library, her departure being the sequel for an exchange of significant glances between Mrs. Fortescue and de Lorme.

"What are you two up to?" asked O'Rourke.

"I am only admiring the way Natalie casts off her own share in bringing about this marriage of Sir Hugh's—the '*Secret de Polichinelle*' of the Sargent family," Mrs. Fortescue observed.

"Mrs. Hillyard's an old hand at playing with fire," said the captain. "Strange, isn't it, how that story's just got around?"

"I can't think who started it," said Mrs. Fortescue.

"Somebody who hasn't much regard for the consequences, when Sargent finds 'em out. By me soul, I'd like

to do a little fightin' for Lady Sargent on my own account," said O'Rourke.

"Make yourself easy; she'll never hear of it," said Mrs. Fortescue, with rather a strained laugh.

"Oh, my dear madame, she has friends!" And, with a little more than his customary elasticity of gait, the Irishman quitted the hall by the front door.

"How much does he *know*?" asked Forty, blankly.

"I cannot say," answered the Frenchman. "But this I do know, that since our game of bridge at your lodgings last week, when the captain had the misfortune to lose so heavily, he has become an unpleasant acquaintance for us both. I think I shall rid myself of him, and advise you, *ma chère*, to do the same."

Their conference for defense was interrupted by the return of Natalie from the library with Sir Hugh, and by the entrance of Hallett, carrying letters by the evening post, which he spread in neat piles upon a side-table.

"So cruel of me to rout poor Sir Hugh out of that comfortable chair in the library with his book and cigar," said Natalie, "but I've a conviction my electrician will make a mess of something, if he is not overlooked."

"I can spare you a few moments only, Mrs. Hillyard," said Sir Hugh, stiffly. As they were going together to the door, he confronted a side glance from Mrs. Fortescue, which made him pause.

She was standing by the table, looking over the letters, and could not resist the mocking, malicious spirit that bade her taunt him as easy game. Hugh turned abruptly back into the hall.

"On second thought, Mrs. Hillyard, I will ask Baron de Lorme to give you the benefit of his well-known taste," he said, distantly.

"Then, Forty, you and the baron come," exclaimed Natalie, angrily. "What *are* you stopping for?"

"Ready! ready!" cried Mrs. Fortescue. With nimble fingers, she had

taken out of her embroidered reticule a folded paper, and slipped it among the others on the table, which task safely accomplished, she was fully prepared to enjoy herself for the evening.

A few moments later, Vail found Sargent standing irresolute at the foot of the wide stairs.

It was a delightful living-room, that hall at Chelwood, with its great bow-window letting in the beauties of outside, its mellow hues of oak and tapestry, its massive, old-time furniture. To Sylvia, upon her arrival in her husband's home, it had appeared the very core of comfort in the large, stately house full of by-gones; and here, oftenest upon the arm of Hugh's chair, she liked to sit whenever they were indoors.

These people who had overflowed it, unasked, seemed to Sylvia's husband an insult to her, and a profanation of their home. He had endured the long, tiresome day away from her, but now, at the end of it, every beat of his heart cried out for Sylvia. Some hours earlier, she had remonstrated against his submission to Natalie's caprice. He had answered her roughly; she had run away and shut herself in her bedroom. More than once, he had gone to her door, and turned away without asking for admission. Why could she not see he was sufficiently punished by the poor part he had to play?

In this mood, Vail, coming in from his walk with equanimity renewed, found his friend.

"Ha, Sargent, alone? That's good. I want to consult you. Do you know, in this upheaval of to-day, we've all been losing sight of Bobby? Just now, while crossing the lawn, I happened to look up at the billiard-room window, and there, by Jove, was our Infant, with Maudie standing by his side."

"Hang that girl! She here? Vail, that won't do!"

"You'll say so, when you hear all. If I'm not mistaken, The Baby Snatcher's venerable head was reposing on Bobby's shoulder!"

"I say," exclaimed Hugh, in blank dismay, "where's Auntie Loo?"

"Gone to town to avoid her sister-in-law!"

"She must be brought back!"

"She is our only hope!"

"What in the devil does Maudie mean by it?" said Sir Hugh. "I thought old Hillyard had settled her, long ago."

"Do you suppose Forty hasn't nosed out the fact that Miss Hillyard has made a will, dividing her fortune between Bobby and Sylvia?"

"In that case, it is obvious that Auntie Loo——"

"Exactly; and, with your permission, I shall now send a wire to those gentlemanly chambers she has set up for herself in town, to ask her to return to-night to Chelwood."

"Do so," said Hugh, with a look of relief; "but, on no account, worry Sylvia."

"Don't fear for that," Vail said, as he went off; then, pausing for a moment, as if by an afterthought, "by the way, Hugh, old chap, if I were in your place now, do you know what I'd do, as fast as my legs could carry me?"

"What?"

"Go up-stairs!" said Vail, smiling.

"Bachelor's wives!" Hugh said to himself, rather grimly. "I wonder if Kit has the least idea— By Jove, I believe that's Sylvia coming down!"

It was, indeed, Sylvia, in a trailing robe of white, girdled with gold and amethysts, at her breast a knot of violets, her splendid locks twisted low in her neck behind. She was leaning over the baluster, her face in shadow, and Sargent felt, rather than heard, her speak his name.

"Well?" he answered, not too cheerfully.

"*Couldn't* you come up?" the voice a little stronger, and full of longing.

"I think not, thank you."

"Then, I'll come down."

There was a swift rush downward, a billowing behind her of masses of gauze and lace, and a happy call from Hugh.

"Stop! Let us meet half-way!"

In a moment he had her in his arms,

and they came down, lovingly entwined.

"Want your tea?" he asked.

"Oh, dear, no! Had it long ago! What a horrid tea-table—all higgledy-piggledy! You have been a bachelor again all the afternoon, haven't you? Did you like it, Hugh?"

"I hated and loathed it, and you know I did, you witch!"

"I was horrid, wasn't I?"

"Rather. For you, that is, not for anybody else."

"Sit down, you darling, in our own big chair, and let me get on the arm of it. There, that's more comfy for a talk. Oh, Hugh, darling, *darling*, what a wretch I was, to stay locked in, and hear you tiptoeing off from my door! How could I ever give up to such mean, jealous feelings as I had?"

"No matter. You won't have them any more?"

"Never. Every minute of the time, I was just *dying* to open that door and throw myself into your arms!"

"Why didn't you?"

"Because, when I got over the wicked temper Natalie had put me in—oh, it wasn't all your being cross to me—you can't imagine how she tortured me, after luncheon, when we were alone a little while— I wanted to put myself under discipline."

"Rather hard on me," said Hugh, ruefully.

"We can laugh, now that we're happy and together, but, while it lasted, it was awful."

"I feel like a rag after it!"

"Now comes my penance. Not only is Lady Sargent going to behave beautifully to her guests, *all* of them, *all* the evening, but she's going to own to her husband that he was right from the beginning, and she was wrong."

"Let's talk of it no more," Hugh exclaimed.

"But I must!" protested she. "I owe it to you to tell you that, now, I *perfectly* understand your relation to Natalie."

"Sylvia!" he began, frowning, and rising to leave her in possession of the

Jacobean chair that had held them both.

"Please hear me, Hugh. I'll never rest till I tell you. The reason you bear with her so angelically is because she's my guardian's wife, and he was so good to me when we were married!"

"Sylvia!" he exclaimed, taking her two hands to bury his face in them, in relief that it was no worse.

"Oh," I said, "I shall put myself in his place, and say, 'I, Hugh Sargent, can't stoop to be petty like that foolish wife of mine. I'm under endless obligations to the Hillyards. I've stopped in their house for weeks, dined with them a hundred times. I must meet this imposition like a gentleman.'" Oh, Hugh, dear, don't tell me a man isn't bigger and truer to high instincts than a woman. We are little, and catty, and resentful. But you'll see, I'll be worthy of you! You'll see!"

"Sylvia, my own wife!" he answered, deeply moved by her innocent homage. "Run up-stairs, now, and get dressed for the evening. Tell Marie to do her very best."

"Yes; and I've decided to wear that Cleopatra gown we got in Paris, and your mother's jewels. Natalie *will* be surprised at my grandeur!"

"And then come down and take your place at your husband's side, as mistress of his house, during these revels thrust upon us. By to-morrow, Chelwood will be itself again, and all your troubles will have vanished, along with the caterer's folks and the Chinese lanterns."

"That they will," she said, radiantly.

"Oh, we're dining, I forgot to say, at eight-thirty, in the veranda, where it's cool, in order to leave the dining-room for the men to prepare the supper."

"Clever idea, that, of yours!"

"It wasn't my idea," said he, hesitating a little.

"Oh—Natalie's?" she answered, with a drop in her voice.

"It seemed a good one," he went on, timorously.

"Certainly, a good one," she an-

swered; "only, I think I might have been consulted. There I go off again, Hugh. Never mind! I'm sorry, already!"

Sir Hugh gathered her in a strong embrace.

"Sweetheart, you are still a child! Now, I actually must go outside, and have an eye on the final preparations."

"Come to my room when Marie's done with me," she said. "I am a little anxious about Cleopatra's sleeve."

"What is the matter with it?" asked her husband, smiling.

"There isn't any. Just a row of spangles. We must do something respectable with tulle. Oh, I do want to look my best!"

"In any case, you'll be the sweetest and prettiest Lady Sargent that ever stood here!" he said, in departing.

"If you think so—that's all I ask," she called after him.

As the door closed upon her husband, leaving the girl alone amid the creeping shadows of the beautiful old hall, she uttered a little cry, born of her overwhelming feeling.

"Oh, my God, how I love him! So much, that I'm afraid!"

Singing in her happiness, Lady Sargent fluttered for a moment about the hall, tidying chairs, cushions and books, as a nice house-mistress will, and in her heart rejoicing that her uncongenial visitors still kept themselves out of her reach. While so engaged, her eye fell upon the letters, and, with a sigh, she took up the small heap of them intended for herself. The thought flashed to her how little one cares for letters when one has all the world at home!

Then, the journal deposited by Mrs. Fortescue was picked up mechanically, with indifferent fingers. The blue lines around a certain paragraph failed to attract her curiosity. She thought it was the usual mention of the return of Sir Hugh and Lady Sargent to Chelwood Park. "Happy Lady Sargent," she said, within herself, "to have Chelwood Park to return to! Is it I, really I, lonely, un-

friended Sylvia Ridgeway, who has come into this proud estate?"

Another moment, and the meaning of the marked paragraph was blazed into her brain. Vail found her clutching the paper, and staring at him with wild eyes.

"Read, Kit, read!" she gasped, thrusting it into his grasp.

He did not need to obey her. Too often had the unhappy story been whispered to him, of late, by casual, curious people. He knew it had got abroad and was beyond recall. But if it had only been spared Sylvia!

"Kit, you don't answer. Is it true?" she asked, shuddering.

"True! Oh, Sylvia, where's your faith, your high spirit, your superiority to petty gossip?"

"You don't answer me. Then, tell me only this. Do they say my husband was there, engaged in a low, vulgar intrigue with *her* when he married me? Why should he have married me? Wasn't the world all before him where to choose? Wasn't I happy in believing in him? Happier than in marrying him to fall to *this*?"

"Sylvia," Vail answered, carried away by her fiery challenge. "I positively won't talk to you while you are in this excited state. You wrong Hugh, but, above all, you wrong yourself. You couldn't be more overcome if it were true."

"If it were true! Then it isn't true? Ah, Kit, dear Kit, tell me it isn't true? He never loved Natalie—that way! Tell me only that, and I'll be grateful all my life!"

"Sylvia," Vail said, after a pause, while he chose his words, "Hugh is my best friend, and your husband, the man you have sworn to keep to for worse or better. Is it fair to either of us to ask me that question?"

"Oh, no, it's base!" cried she, wringing her hands. "It's Hugh, *Hugh*, I ought to ask!"

Greatly troubled, Vail answered her as if she had been an ailing child.

"Don't you believe that Hugh loves you?"

"Of course he does!" cried Sylvia.

"Why, not ten minutes since—" She dropped her head in fond remembrance.

"I *know* he does, with his whole, honest heart."

"What must I do?" she said, cheering in spite of herself.

"Dry your eyes, little girl, and I'll tell you. Your house, worse luck, is full, and will be fuller, of people, some of whom would enjoy no spectacle so much as that of the new Lady Sargent suffering from a fit of jealousy of a suspected rival. For Hugh's sake, for the sake of the happy life I believe you will lead together, I implore you to give no sign that the story has reached your ears."

"You are right, Kit," she said, holding up her head.

"Trust Hugh. Stand by Hugh, and that will be the best answer to suspicion."

"I will! I will!" cried Sylvia.

"That's better!" said Vail, taking the paper from her hand and putting it in his pocket. "Now the red has come back to your cheeks. Your eyes shine as I like to see them. Bear yourself like a soldier, Lady Sargent, and, believe me, you'll conquer yet!"

"Oh, you'll see!" she cried, breaking away from him, and running impetuously up the stairs. "Good-bye, Kit! I must run on, now, and get ready. You've put new life in me. I'm not sad any more—I'm happy. Why, I could fight a duel, lead a forlorn hope, trample my enemies under foot, defy the universe—anything—only to show the world that my husband is mine, mine, mine!"

Vail looked up at her, smiling. When she had disappeared, he sighed.

IV

EVENING in the gardens of Chelwood Park! Certainly, whatever might be said of Mrs. Hillyard's methods of accomplishment, her taste was indisputable, and the result as satisfactory as if she had been an excellent and scrupulous person, of the

highest moral standards. Even Vail, wandering about from scene to scene of her festivity, in his most cynical mood, had to admit the success of the fête as a brilliant spectacle, moving like clock-work in every detail.

The dazzling beauty of the dances on the old bowling-green, with its clipped hedges and box peacocks and vases, illuminated with subtle skill, had culminated in Natalie's "Dresden-china minuet." In this, Mrs. Hillyard, Mrs. Fortescue, Maudie and the compliant Lady Clanberry took part, with O'Rourke, de Lorme, Godfrey and Bobby as their cavaliers, all attired in costumes of white satin, sprigged with flowers of gold and rose, looking as if they had stepped out of Marcolini's "Carnival of Venice."

Now, the dancers trod their stately measures in a flood of rosy radiance; again, they assumed the uniform tint of palest violet, and so on, through the gamut of colors, until, at the very end, in a blaze of amber light, they took and held the attitudes of a shelf full of Dresden figurines, as if stricken to porcelain by a wizard unseen in the boskage.

Applause fell like hail from the guests looking on. Then, as another band struck up a waltz, the bowling-green became invaded by people in dominoes and masks. Five Pierrots, with linked hands, ran about laughing, capering and playing pranks. Suddenly, seized by a spirit of daring, these youngsters undertook to bar the way before an arch of evergreen at the entrance of a long alley leading to the house, demanding that every one who came through it should pay toll by a dance with them.

The first victim, as it turned out, was a foeman worthy of the steel of even the "Invincible Pierrots." Bobby Hillyard, after being told off by Natalie to fill the place and wear the costume of Maudie's intended partner in the minuet—unfortunately detained in town by the cutting of a wisdom tooth—felt that, for once, Fortune had played into his hands. Certain conclusions reached by Miss Fortescue

and himself during their prolonged interview in the billiard-room before dinner, had fired his blood, and inspired his heart to any deed demanding action.

As Maudie and he strolled down the cedar walk, and through the arch, unconscious of lurking forms on the other side, Bobby was overheard to say:

"This way, dearest. I know where you can rest."

"'Dearest'! oh, my heart!" whispered one of the listening Pierrots.

"Anywhere with you, Robert!" Maudie's voice made answer.

There was a stifled burst of laughter. The Pierrots bounded out to surround the incoming couple, and clamorously demanded their toll. Bobby, on hearing the extent of the penalty, threw off his domino, and allowed them to ring him in, all dancing together in mad merriment. Soon, it became evident to the Invincible Pierrots that they had been out-generaled, Bobby continuing to perform surprising feats of agility after each of them in turn had fallen out of the fray, panting and forceless. While the shy Maudie sat masked on a bench, looking on, the Pierrots fell upon a servant passing with a bottle of champagne and glasses, and drank unanimously to the health and welfare of their gallant captive, who was then allowed to pass on with his fair one to another part of the garden.

The next footstep to fall upon the ear of the Pierrots was a ponderous one. It heralded the appearance, beneath the arch, of what they took to be the most remarkable travesty of the evening—a personage of ample dimensions and great height, equipped in an automobilist's outfit, including eye-goggles, who, on arrival among them, spoke with authority to a footman following.

"There, get along with you, young man," said a strident voice. "No need to pilot me around this lunatic asylum. Just see that my chauffeur gets a bite to eat, will you, and tell them to keep my machine waiting first in the line at the lodge-gate!"

"Capital!" cried a Pierrot.

"Immense, simply immense!" cried another.

"Sooner or later, it will be torn from us by Madame Tussaud," exclaimed a third.

"Fair being, receive our homage!" cried out a young fellow, kneeling fantastically at the apparition's feet.

"Receive all our homages!"

They knelt in a circle, then arose, prancing and uttering their war-cry:

"We are the Invincible Pierrots. Dance! dance! dance!"

Miss Lucretia Hillyard, at first indignant, was forced into taking a few steps; then, breaking through their line, she faced them, panting.

"You're a pretty set of madcaps, aren't you?" she asked. "You're far too idiotic to get angry with, but, I'd have you to know, I'm not masquerading; I'm simply in the everyday costume of a lady out for a moonlight spin, who came down to Chelwood for the purpose of looking after a young relative believed to be making even more of a fool of himself than nature intended. I am told he was seen going in this direction. Under these circumstances, I trust the Invincible Pierrots will see the propriety of not interrupting me further."

There was something in her tone that commanded respect, and the Pierrots, one and all, lined up like gentlemen.

"Whom have we the honor of addressing?" asked their leader.

"I forgot to say that I'm Lady Sargent's aunt," observed Miss Hillyard, blandly.

The Pierrots, muttering apologies, fled incontinently. Aunt Loo, looking after them with twinkling eyes, decided to rest upon a tempting seat within a rose-arbor at hand, before resuming her quest of Robert.

"Bless me! I haven't cut the pigeon wing in a hundred years!" she said. "I must get my wind again, for the charge on Bobby."

As she ensconced herself in a nook created for youth and tender sentiment, the old lady's face grew grim.

She heard the approaching Bobby's voice, in earnest conversation, and what he said was plainly audible.

"Hang these people for taking that place I wanted! No, Maudie, don't try to change now. My mind's made up. Nobody shall say I've ridden at a fence I'm afraid to take! I may break my neck going over it, but at least I won't have shirked!"

"Right stuff!" muttered Aunt Loo, hesitating greatly whether or not to declare her presence as the couple strayed into the moonlit bit of path, full in her line of vision. But Maudie's answer decided her to keep silence.

"Dearest, have you considered all the consequences of our rash action?"

"What are consequences, beside you and happiness?" answered the lad.

"Your—your father?" ventured the lady.

"He's sworn he'll disinherit me if I marry you, but what's that, provided I have you, and you have me?"

"Nothing; of course not," said she, faintly, "since there's your aunt—"

"Aunt Loo?" repeated Bobby.

"Yes, hasn't she said—doesn't she mean to leave you half her fortune?"

"Haven't heard of it!" responded he, cheerfully. "She might be good for a wedding-present, the dear old lady might, but I'll be hanged if I begin married life by sponging on her for a living."

"Oh!" answered Maudie, in a deeply disappointed tone. "Perhaps, Robert, we are too rash—too daring. Let us wait—"

"Wait! What for? You wrote me you'd join me here to-night, and told me to get everything ready. I've the special license in my pocket. We'll slip into the house now, and change our clothes. These dominoes, the crowd, are in our favor. The motor-car I ordered from town is waiting at the lodge-gate. We can get off like a streak of lightning. I'll take you straight to your friend in Mount street, then go to my hotel, and tomorrow we'll be married hard and

fast! Come, Maudie, cheer up! If the worst comes to the worst, I won't be the first fellow that's had to work for the girl he loves."

"Families rarely hold out," said Maudie; "but—but——"

"No 'buts'!" cried the gallant Bobby. "It's all settled, I tell you. Take me now or never! Come!"

"Oh, Robert!" began the still doubtful bride-elect; but her remonstrance was lost to Miss Lucretia's ear, by Bobby's hurrying her away. As the two dominoes disappeared up the cedar walk, Auntie Loo emerged from her retirement, with a queer look on her face.

"Nice boy, that! Worth saving!" She paused, for a moment, thinking. "'Now or never.' Poor, fleeced lamb! H'm! 'Motor-car waiting at the gate!' So's mine waiting at the gate. Well, as we say in America, though I wouldn't let Bobby hear me speak it, 'What's the matter with *my* driving that party up to town?'"

With a brisk step, the grotesque figure marched away into the shadows, turning up a side-path just in time to avoid meeting Sylvia, gorgeous in her Cleopatra gown, who had begged Vail to take her for a few moments out of the crowd to where it was cool and restful.

"How delicious!" the girl exclaimed, when they reached the rose-arbor. "Kit, I think I could never weary of the nooks in this dear old garden. . . . But you have not once told me how you like my dress!"

"It may be the costumer's idea of Cleopatra, right enough," said the truthful Vail, "but it's all out as to facts. And, besides, it isn't Sylvia."

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She was apparently keyed to the highest pitch of excitement. The evening had proved to her more than a success. She had been like a boat tossed from wave to wave of flattery and adulation. The mistress of Chelwood had, indeed, taken her new place dashingly.

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"How provoking of her! But everything has gone wrong with me this evening. Just now, I was called into the house by a telegram about my husband."

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"Fortune of war, Mrs. Fortescue. You and I are old soldiers. Isn't repulse what we expect, when we go raidin' in the enemy's country?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean? When she was nobody, I was always Sylvia's friend."

"O Friendship, what crimes are committed in thy name!" went on O'Rourke, meaningly.

"Really, Captain O'Rourke," said the lady, with an assumption of innocence attacked, "I am just a little tired of your insinuations. The baron, here, agrees with me."

"But certainly, madame," said de Lorme, ranging himself beside her, and casting a vengeful look at the captain, "I, too, am very tired of them."

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SYLVIA'S HUSBAND

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"Take it aisy, ma'am. It's always darkest just before the dawn," said O'Rourke, consolingly. "Grand success, this ball! Did you see how my Lady Sargent swept all before her? She that expected to be queen of the evenin' was outshone entirely."

"But she has taken an early revenge," answered Mrs. Fortescue, maliciously. "Don't speak to me of that under-bred Sylvia Ridgeway! Why, the way she's given some of her guests the cold shoulder to-night, is simply scandalous."

"Fortune of war, Mrs. Fortescue. You and I are old soldiers. Isn't repulse what we expect, when we go raidin' in the enemy's country?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you mean? When she was nobody, I was always Sylvia's friend."

"O Friendship, what crimes are committed in thy name!" went on O'Rourke, meaningly.

"Really, Captain O'Rourke," said the lady, with an assumption of innocence attacked, "I am just a little tired of your insinuations. The baron, here, agrees with me."

"But certainly, madame," said de Lorme, ranging himself beside her, and casting a vengeful look at the captain, "I, too, am very tired of them."

THE SMART SET

"When we get back to town," went on Mrs. Fortescue, "I'm afraid I sha'n't see as much of you in the future, as in the past."

"As you like, ma'am," answered O'Rourke, imperturbably. "Certainly, I should not think Baron de Lorme would ask to see too much of me. If he did, I should be only too happy to exchange any compliments he can suggest. But, if the two of ye'd take my advice, ye'd not be tarrying overlong at Chelwood. It's my candid opinion, this air's not the wholesomest for ye."

"Nonsense! You're impertinent. What have I to fear?" began Mrs. Fortescue, visibly nervous.

She was interrupted by the arrival of Hallett, pausing at her elbow, his usual smug serenity completely ruffled.

"If you please, madam," said the butler, "it is my duty to inform you that Miss Fortescue has eloped with Master Robert!"

Mrs. Fortescue tried to turn pale, but her rouge would not admit of it. She also tried to look overwhelmed with grief, and only succeeded in keeping her satisfaction within decent bounds.

"Eloped! Impossible!" she exclaimed, then added, unconsciously, "Maudie would never have had the pluck. Go on, Hallett. Tell me what you know?"

"I had just stepped down to the lodge-gate, madam, to serve a little refreshment to a pal of mine who couldn't leave his 'orses, when I see two dominoes—one of 'em carryin' a lady's dressing-bag and a gentleman's kit as looked familiar. They came stealing down under the laurels and out by the side-gate into the driveway. A motor-car was blocking the way first in the line of carriages, but the chauffeur was nowhere in sight. Quick as a flash, the domino tossed the two bags into it, assisted the other to get into the car, and then called out for the chauffeur—most impatiently, and with an expression I'd scorn to use myself."

"Go on, Hallett. Tell us exactly what occurred!"

"He called out to know where his damned, loafing motorman was hidin'.

I knew Master Robert's voice in an instant, ma'am. Then, running out of the bushes, came the chauffeur. I'm blest if ever I see such a queer figure of a man! He popped into his seat—there was a moment of delay——"

"But they got off—they got off?" queried Maudie's mama, anxiously.

"Lord love you, ma'am, they did—in a whiff," answered her minion, dropping into homely vernacular; then, recovering himself, "while I was standing, open-mouthed, as one might say. At the very moment of leaving, I heard Miss Fortescue exclaim, 'Oh, Robert!' and then I knew my suspicions was correct."

"Don't faint, Mrs. Fortescue!" said O'Rourke, smiling. De Lorme, readjusting his eye-glasses, offered his aid in recovering her lost treasure, and Hallett stood statuesquely by.

"Any orders, ma'am?" he said, professionally.

"I must think," answered she, feigning emotion. "My naughty, impulsive child—only a dressing-bag! Of course, she will send home for her things. Go away, Hallett, and don't open your lips about this affair till I give you leave."

"Yes, Mrs. Fortescue," the man answered.

"I said, *don't open your lips*. You understand?"

"I understand," he repeated, backing out, nervously, as she took two steps toward him.

"Now, I can't tell her that I considered it my duty to inform my lady, *first*," passed through his perturbed mind. "Neither is this the time to obey orders, and put into her hands the note Sir Hugh give me to give my lady, before he left the rooms with Mrs. Hill-yard kinder sudden like, a while ago." And Hallett fairly ran away.

"Heavens! what an evening of emotions!" exclaimed Mrs. Fortescue, triumph rising in her voice. "I'd like to see Sylvia Ridgeway's face, when she hears Maudie has married Bobby!"

At that moment, Sylvia, erect, fearless, trailing her splendid draperies behind her, swept down upon them. The

two men instinctively fell back, leaving her face to face with her enemy.

"You wish to see me, Mrs. Fortescue?" asked Lady Sargent, in a cold, contemptuous tone.

"It is evident you know what has occurred," answered Mrs. Fortescue, disagreeably taken by surprise.

"Yes, I have heard of the success of your plot to entrap my cousin," said Sylvia, indignantly.

"Don't you think, since our families are now to be allied, it would be more graceful for us to accept the situation like women of the world?" asked Forty, in an insinuating, but patronizing, tone.

"I do not call myself a woman of your world. That you have strayed from its limits into mine is my misfortune. Mrs. Fortescue, you have taxed my hospitality and not found it wanting. But the experiment ends here, and forever."

"Oh, if you're going to get up and ramp like that," said Mrs. Fortescue, with an unpleasant laugh, "I've no further use for you. So, ta-ta, Sylvia; we'll try to take care of Bobby!"

Beckoning de Lorme to follow her, she had started to leave the place, when intercepted by Hallett, who approached his mistress with a note upon a salver.

"For Mrs. Fortescue, m'lady," he said, with an unmoved face. "Just arrived by special messenger from Foxbury."

"Give it to me!" exclaimed Mrs. Fortescue, returning hurriedly, and snatching up the envelope. "Foxbury! Where's that? The stuffy little village two miles from here? . . . Who can—?" Tearing open the note, she uttered a faint scream.

"Oh, this is beyond belief! Listen, everybody, to the way these people are insulting me:

"THE HEART OF OAK,
FOX-BURY.

"MADAME: It was my privilege to accompany your daughter and my nephew in their attempted elopement as far as this place, where, an unaccountable accident happening to my machine, we have put up for the night. Your daughter, after some conversation with me as to my nephew's finan-

cial status, has concluded to try matrimony in some other quarter than our family. My nephew has already gone on to town. Miss Fortescue thinks that perhaps you will wish to join her here, which I hope will be very soon, as I am sleeping on a sofa a foot too short for me, and the landlady is not what I call respectful.

"Yours obediently,
"LUCRETIA HILLYARD."

Sylvia's eyes brightened with suppressed laughter. Mrs. Fortescue looked like a thunder-cloud.

"So much for the manners and customs of Lady Sargent's world!" she exclaimed, furiously. "But I do not stop to discuss with you the doings of this mad-woman. I dare say, I can have a trap to take me to Foxbury—"

"Certainly, Mrs. Fortescue."

Hallett, who had wisely retired behind the shrubbery, now came forward again.

"I beg pardon, m'lady. There is also a telegram for Mrs. Fortescue."

He took a telegram from his pocket, and, laying it upon a salver, presented it ceremoniously.

"Why was I not given this at once?" cried the ireful Forty.

"I was afraid, ma'am, you would not feel able to stand so much."

"You afraid! Off with you!" she cried, scornfully, opening the second envelope with feverish fingers, and uttering a heartfelt cry.

"I knew it! Any other man would have had the decency to die at a better time!"

She rushed away, Hallett in her wake, Sylvia looking after them in astonishment.

"What is it?" she asked O'Rourke.

"Her husband, poor soul, is after goin' to his rest!" said the captain.

"Permit me, miladi," now observed de Lorme, who thought he saw his opportunity to cover, successfully, his own retreat, "to offer my congratulations upon your skill in ridding yourself of a very dangerous woman."

"Pardon me, Baron de Lorme, if I decline to accept them from one whom I choose to include no longer among my acquaintances," said Sylvia, looking him straight in the eyes.

"Miladi!" he said, reddening darkly.

"I thought, at least," she went on, "that people of your stripe and hers, stood together. I understand, upon good authority, that yours and Mrs. Fortescue's is a partnership, not in cards only, but in the promulgation of slanderous assertions about people whose bread and salt you eat. Perhaps you will feel like joining her, also, in the trap that will take her from my house!"

"Is it the custom of English gentlewomen to insult their guests?" he cried. But, seeing her back turned on him, he prudently contented himself with a quick departure from the scene.

"My turn next, Lady Sargent?" asked O'Rourke. "If I'm routed, I'll try to meet it like a soldier, and retreat with my colors flying."

"No, captain," she answered, smiling. "I think yours is simply a case of abnormal infatuation for bridge, and poor judgment in associates. Please try to forget how rude I've had to be in your hearing, and do me a little service."

"Bedad, I'd go barefoot to Land's End to please your ladyship!" he exclaimed.

"Not so far as that. Look for my husband, who's probably showing orchids to fat old Lady Stratharden, and tell him I——"

Sylvia, flushed with her triumphs, beamingly confident, had, involuntarily, turned her head at the sound of a rustle in the shrubbery beside her. A couple of dark forms were coming out of darker shadows into the brilliancy of the illuminations around a fountain close at hand. They were talking earnestly together, and did not see her, so that she had full time to note them carefully before they parted, the man to go on toward the house, the woman—whither, Sylvia neither knew nor cared.

In one moment, the mad, unreasoning jealousy of the day arose up within her, throbbing with renewed life. To conquer it, to cast it back into bondage was her first wish.

"No, you needn't look for my hus-

band," she said to O'Rourke, in a totally changed voice. "I forgot that he is otherwise engaged. But—I'm very tired, if you wouldn't mind leaving me here for a little while alone——"

"Faith, that's harder than fightin' your battles, my lady!" exclaimed the enthusiastic captain.

He left her, nevertheless, and Sylvia stood holding her rebellious heart, in shame at her speedy fall from grace.

Now were all the glories of her evening become like Dead Sea apples upon her palate! But amid these tumultuous thoughts arose the remembrance of her pledges to Vail and Hugh. She would be brave; she would trust, trust, forever trust, until from Hugh's own lips should come confirmation of her fears.

Thus Natalie, hastening in search of her scattered party for supper, found her rival, and in Sylvia's ingenuous face read what filled her with satisfaction.

"Sylvia, child!" she exclaimed, letting slip her domino from the glistening beauties of her costume, "why aren't you doing the honors to Lord Stratharden? Didn't I meet O'Rourke hurrying away from you? My dear, you *are* advanced! However, in your case every one makes allowances, don't you see?"

"I have seen more than that," said Sylvia, firmly.

"What! You were peeping at Hugh and me? Oh, that's too dreadfully *bourgeoise*. Doesn't it occur to you that it may be something of a relief for Hugh to get back among his own set again? What! still huffy? My dear child, your temper is execrable. You certainly need training in the outward seeming of good society."

"Perhaps so, for consider my models when in your house," said Sylvia, quietly.

"If you go on in this way, you will soon make yourself ridiculous. Just now, no doubt, Hugh, flattered by your heroics, laughs at you, and rallies you. By-and-bye, you will weary him, and, at the end of a few months, he'll be glad enough to get back to

reasonable beings. Perhaps, that time has already come."

"I think not," said Sylvia, calmly. "Hugh and I know each other perfectly."

"He knows you, perfectly, no doubt—but, do you know him?"

The insulting meaning she put into her query stung Sylvia to the quick.

"What do you mean?" the girl said, haughtily.

"Oh, nothing," answered Natalie, in the same tone.

"A nothing like that must mean everything to a wife."

"Let us talk about your costume!" exclaimed Natalie, airily. "Whoever made it for you, don't go to him again. And all those jewels, child! You might lead the procession in a Christmas pantomime!"

"They are the Sargent jewels. I am proud to wear them. Wouldn't you be if they were yours?" said Sylvia, innocently assuming the great lady.

"You know very well William is only a parvenu, and has no ancestral jewels to bestow," snapped Natalie.

"Hugh says the rubies are yet to come—a complete parure—necklace, tiara and all. Think of it!"

Natalie, who had a passion for jewels, could not endure this final touch.

"All this to bedeck the child of a pauper artist!" she said, sneeringly.

"All this to bedeck Lady Sargent, of Chelwood Park!" returned Sylvia, who, Natalie felt with rage, was certainly getting the better of their war of words.

"Well, my dear," Mrs. Hillyard resumed, with mild contempt, "there's no dealing with one so absurdly puffed up as you are. Every one's laughing at it behind your back, to-night. For Hugh's sake, try to keep it in. He shouldn't be made a laughing-stock, should he, just because he did rather the most heroic thing a man can do—sacrifice himself, to pull a woman out of the hole he'd got her into."

Sylvia looked her opponent full in the face. She had realized her danger

in their unequal conflict, had known that the poisoned dart would fall somewhere. Now, it had fallen.

"What you are hinting at, I do not ask to know—" she began; but Natalie cut her short.

"That's right. Be trustful. It's beautiful, and, under your circumstances, comforting. Now, I think I shall leave you to your reflections. I am sure those minuet people mistook my directions, and are waiting for me, indoors. You know our party at supper is to be quite unique—the table set with all-gold plate, pink roses, and the pink Dresden candelabra from Hugh's mother's cabinet. Hugh is the only outsider we shall allow to sit with us at table."

"I am sorry," said Sylvia, containing herself with an effort, "but you must give up your minuet suppertable."

"Why, pray?" asked Natalie, superbly.

"For one thing, because your party is broken up. Miss Fortescue and Bobby are absent, and I was obliged to ask Mrs. Fortescue and Baron de Lorme also to leave Chelwood."

"You—you presumed to insult my friends?"

"I requested those low and scurrilous persons to leave my house," Sylvia answered, steadily.

"Your house! *your* house!" cried Natalie, with blazing eyes. "Who put you here, I'd like to know?"

"Who, but my husband?" said Sylvia, simply.

"If you prefer to think so! Really, this pretense at ignorance is the merest affectation."

"I believe my husband. No slander of vile tongues shall come between us. Take care! For my guardian's sake, I'm doing my best to bear with you; but, after this, there can be no pretense of intercourse between us. When you leave Chelwood to-morrow, understand that I will never know you again—still less, under any circumstances, receive you here."

Natalie could not believe her ears. The girl she had snubbed and patron-

ized, rising upon her in such fearless contempt, and dismissing her the house like an offending lady's maid! She would dispense with hints, and give her her punishment in plain words, and speedily, at no matter what cost!

"You!" she said, "you! The beggar I set on horseback, the nobody Hugh took up and married, to save me from my husband's fearful jealousy! Surely, you remember the day at Ballyrig!"

"Have you no shame?" cried Sylvia.

Natalie shrugged her shoulders.

"Since you force me to dot my i's!"

"It's not true, not true!"

"Think anything you choose, but, for heaven's sake, cultivate common-sense, and treat me, before others, with a show of civility. In this way, we may still manage to run along together, fairly well—really, the only way to manage these affairs."

"It's not true, not true!" repeated Sylvia, shuddering away from her.

"Still incredulous?" said Natalie, with a triumphant laugh. "Well, my dear, in that case, all you've got to do is to ask Hugh."

"I will ask him!" exclaimed Sylvia, stoutly.

"Sylvia, sweetheart! Sylvia!"

It was her husband calling. He had been seeking her everywhere, and by O'Rourke's direction now came hurrying toward the fountain. Never had the sound of her own name been so dear to her. Hugh was coming. He would defy Natalie, and put her wicked words to confusion.

"Hugh!" she cried out. He recognized in her voice a poignant appeal, and ran to her protection.

Full in his path stood Natalie, her dainty beauty unchanged by the evil thoughts and inspirations of her scheme to punish Sylvia. One glance at her, and one at Sylvia, was enough to reveal to him what had been passing between the two. Knowing Natalie as he did, he had always dreaded it.

"Hugh, tell her that she lies!" cried Sylvia, clinging to him, her whole anguished heart in her appeal.

"What has she said?" he answered, hoarsely.

"Ask Sir Hugh Sargent to deny," interposed Natalie, distinctly, "that when that jealous, furious old bore of mine surprised us in conversation about our own affairs in the woods at Ballyrig, to save myself I deliberately threw you upon his hands, forcing you to propose for her in marriage when you had not intended to, and thereby substantially composing my husband's mind, since he, like you, fell into the net at once!"

"Mrs. Hillyard—" began Sargent, desperately.

"Deny the facts as I have stated them," she said. "Ah! you can't. I thought so. Sylvia, won't that do?"

"Hugh, Hugh!" cried his wife, passionately. "What she's making you suffer is nothing to what I'm feeling. Only two words—a movement—and I'll believe you utterly. Never again shall she come between us, my husband! Never, I swear it, Hugh!"

There was a moment's silence. They could hear the band in the distance change to "*La Donna e Mobile*." The five Pierrots, scenting supper from afar, dashed up an alley, calling out: "Dance! dance! dance!" The three persons who stood near the illuminated fountain did not stir.

Then, despair gripped Sylvia's heart. She cared nothing for Natalie standing there with her mocking smile, and listening to her cry of the heart.

"Hugh!" she implored again, "I can't bear this awful silence! I haven't deserved it! It kills me! Speak! Think that my whole life's happiness hangs on your answer. It's false, isn't it? False! false! Answer me that, and all the rest of our married life shall be like one long, bright Summer's day, Hugh. I've had you such a little while, I can't lose you so soon. Don't let her take you from me. If she does, I shall want to die. Answer me! Say it's false!"

Hugh Sargent bowed his head.

"I cannot."

Both women heard him, though he spoke under his breath.

"I thought not!" said Natalie, in a pleasant and equable tone. "Good-bye, for the present, Hugh, and, for the sake of old times, bear me no malice."

She did not notice Sylvia, but fluttered off, airy and exquisite, taking the arm of a man she met going in to supper, and laughing with him, unconcernedly.

Sylvia, following her with bewildered eyes, dropped upon a bench, burying her hot face in her hands. Her husband, the first miserable moment at an end, went to her impulsively, and tried to take her in his arms; but she drew away from him with an unmistakable shudder; then, arising suddenly, she fled into the fragrant darkness of the night.

Kit Vail hastened to Hugh presently, asking, in cheery tones, what had become of their host, who was wanted to take Lady Stratharden down to supper.

"And Sylvia—where is she?" he added, a great change manifest in his voice when he caught sight of his friend's woe-stricken face.

"A moment ago, I lost her, Kit," said Hugh, "and it is just as if she had died."

V

ALMOST a year after the disastrous events of the fête at Chelwood—which, happily, did not become public gossip—a little group of three were variously engaged in the great hall of the manor-house, which frequently served the purposes of a family sitting-room.

Sylvia, who had lain low under suffering, and had forced herself to arise and come out again into everyday life, looked handsomer than of old, in her simple house-gown. She was engaged in making the toilette of her Chow puppy that whimpered a little under her vigorous brushing, but resigned himself to stand still in the grasp of Bobby Hillyard, who, in riding clothes, was at Sylvia's elbow. Away over by the window, where

from time to time she could look at the ever-deepening verdure of the Park, sat Auntie Loo, knitting a golf stocking.

Upon none of the three was change so manifest as in the truculent old lady, whose countenance wore a peacefulness of expression in harmony with her tranquil attitude and feminine occupation. Her very dress had lost its uncompromising masculinity of cut and texture. She looked years younger, and happy in spite of an anxious care that ever haunted the recesses of her sunny heart to see certain things righted in the lives of those now absorbing her daily thoughts.

"There, he's finished, the beautiful angel!" said Sylvia. "Thanks, Bobby, you may let him go. Now you shall be rewarded by getting a scamper down to the fish-pond, and a good bark at the swans."

"Who? I?" asked Bobby.

"Nonsense!" Sylvia answered, tapping him on the cheek with the handle of the Chow's hair-brush. Then she released the joyous and most human little beast, who fled in front of her to the door that Bobby opened for the pair.

"You'll tell her now?" asked Sylvia, in an undertone, as she was going out.

"Must I?" Bobby said, reluctant.

"You promised," said Sylvia, vanishing with a sigh which would not be smiled away.

Bobby came back with slow steps to where Miss Hillyard sat.

"And to think of me sitting without a creep in the room with a pet dog!" remarked aunty.

"Oh, you're a good sort, aunty. That isn't the only young animal you've allowed to impose on you!" said her nephew.

Aunty Loo answered him with begrudging gentleness. "Mustn't let you bore yourself to death, boy, down here in the country, seeing no one, going nowhere, leading this quiet life with two humdrum women."

"Nobody'd think of calling you humdrum, Aunty Loo. And as for Sylvia, she's the best, the pluckiest,

the most charming creature that ever drew breath!"

Miss Hillyard dropped her knitting, and looked at him.

"Robert, perhaps you'd better go back to town."

"Don't fear that for me, aunty," he said, laughing. "I'm safe—bomb-proof. But you can't think what Sylvia's been to me since my father's been so hard on me, keeping me back from where I long to be."

"Where poor Sir Hugh is," supplemented Miss Lucretia, sighing.

"Where all the best fellows I know are—down yonder, in South Africa."

"Ah, well! you're your father's only son, Bobby, and since that wretched woman ran away from him with a miserable, limp, little, weak-kneed object of a poet, who can't buy her a mutton-chop——"

"Yet, I'm told the Godfreys have got quite a decent little flat. Who supports 'em, Aunty Loo?"

"Don't know. Ravens, I suppose," said Miss Lucretia, gruffly.

"Don't call yourself names, old lady. I know your little tricks—trouble hasn't softened my governor. He's harder than ever to me. If it wasn't for you and Sylvia, and the hope that some day my father will remember an only son isn't an unusual apparition when the British army is at the front——"

"There, boy, don't talk of it. Maybe things will come around your way. If you've got bothers, look at Sylvia's. See how she bears 'em—how she's borne 'em all these months."

Bobby had picked up her knitting, and now made havoc of it in his nervousness.

"Aunty Loo," he said, clearing his throat, "I've got something to tell you. Sylvia's meditating what you and my friend Capper would call 'a bad break.'"

Miss Hillyard snatched at her knitting.

"Robert, don't be saucy. What do you mean?"

"Ever since she heard Sir Hugh has got safely over his illness, and has

been ordered home, she has been making up her mind to leave Chelwood."

"Leave Chelwood!—when I consented to give up my home and come here that she might continue to live under her own husband's roof?"

"But you don't know. She wants me to tell you. Some time ago, she engaged Vail to get her a divorce."

Miss Hillyard lost all her acquired suavity, and became the only original Aunty Loo.

"Divorce? Fiddlesticks! Vail? Ridiculous! Sylvia drag her affairs into court after all these months of behaving like a quiet Christian woman? I don't believe you, Bobby Hillyard. Divorce? Poppycock! And on what grounds, pray?"

"Between you and me and the lord chancellor," said Bobby, bowing before the blast, "Sylvia's greener than grass about the law. She wants to be free from Hugh, but knows no more than a babe unborn how to set about it. She trusts the whole blessed business to Vail, whom she's expecting any day to tell her how far it's got along."

"Did you say it's Sir Hugh's approaching return that's driving her to this foolery?" asked Miss Hillyard, fiercely.

"So it appears. I'll swear, the way Sargent's been raking in glory, I'd have thought Sylvia would be worshipping him in secret instead of planning to cut loose; but, with women, you can't tell!"

"And Kit Vail lends himself to this egregious, unspeakable folly?"

"I've told you all I know, aunty," Bobby replied, in a tone the more subdued because he fully agreed with her. "I told Sylvia I would, and I have. She said she didn't like to."

"Humph!" snorted the spinster, "no wonder she's ashamed. Preposterous! Why can't she wait till Sir Hugh comes home, and at least give him a chance to patch things up between 'em? Outrageous!"

"Thought you didn't approve of marriage, Aunty Loo?" ventured he, slyly.

"Don't answer back! I never could abide being answered back."

"I've my suspicions she thinks Sargent wants to be free as much as she does."

"Has he ever said so? Robert, this is a lesson to you. If ever a couple began by adoring each other, that one did. A little trust, a little patience—but no! Seems to me people nowadays rush into matrimony by one door, and out of it by another."

"The moral for the likes of us is to keep single, aunty."

"But Vail, Vail—the one sensible man of her acquaintance—"

"Thanks," said Bobby, smiling.

"You abet her, boy. That Kit Vail should deliberately lend himself to the monstrosity of getting her a divorce! He's disappointed me! And as to Sylvia—Robert," she added, rising with all her old abruptness, "I'm going to my room. If anybody asks for me, say I've taken a hot foot-bath, and am reading Jeremiah!" And, knitting in hand, Miss Hillyard majestically mounted the stairs, and went into afflicted seclusion.

"Good old Aunty Loo!" murmured Robert, with something like a cloud over his wide-awake, blue eyes.

Truly, the world seemed out of joint for him and everybody. As he crossed the hall to pick up his hat and crop, and go out for his ride, a servant passed him, hastening discreetly to open the front door. It was a new butler, *vice* the late Hallett, dismissed for sundry offenses directly after the night of the fancy ball.

"Mr. Vail is just arriving, sir," explained the man, "and, as my lady is still out, perhaps you'll receive him."

The door swung open to admit Kit Vail, whose bags and impedimenta the butler proceeded to gather in after him, disappearing with them up the stairs.

"Ha, Bobby! Glad you're stopping on," said Vail, in his customary friendly way.

Bobby, who secretly resented his coming on the proposed mission, tried to be dignified; but a few words passing

between them banished the effort. It was difficult to mistrust Kit Vail, no matter how appearances went against him.

"You've been a blessing to Sylvia, poor girl," said Kit.

"You see, I'm rather out of a job, just now," answered Bobby, who did not choose to touch on a sore subject. "It isn't money, as it used to be. My aunt, good soul, has set me up with more of an allowance than I deserve. But my governor's dead set on putting me in the bank, and I'm dead set on the army and active service."

"You don't want to eat fatted calf at home, when there are soldiers' rations and fighting at the front? I see. I was that way myself, before I settled down to consume veal, or bacon, or whatever I could get my clients to pay for. Cheer up, old man; it'll straighten out, I hope. Sylvia well?"

"Bloomin'," said Bobby, reacting under the other's genial influence. "But, I say, Vail, this is a devilish poor business she's brought you here about!"

"You are in her confidence?" asked Vail, with a non-committal smile.

"I'm next to her brother, don't you see? I wish I were her brother, and had some real authority."

"Authority doesn't count for much, when a woman is set on a step like this."

"I'll swear, what I've seen of marriage doesn't make me sicken for it. Sargent's a fellow any girl should be proud of. That wretched Natalie business—whatever it amounted to—was knocked out long ago. Now, why in the world—?"

"Ask Sylvia. Here she comes," said Vail.

Sylvia entered, running like a school-girl, and greeted Vail eagerly.

"How good of you, Kit! You knew how I hate being kept in suspense. I saw your fly turn in at the lodge-gate, and I called and whistled, but you wouldn't hear me. Had luncheon? Have tea, B-and-S, or anything? No? Then, shall we go into the library, or stay here?"

"Here, if you like Bobby."

"Oh, Bobby knows!" said she, naively. "He was the first whose advice I asked."

"Then, I am surprised you found it necessary to consult counsel," said Vail, mildly.

"Bobby doesn't exactly approve," she went on, nodding her head; "but he thinks I ought to do exactly what I think best."

"Bobby has in him the makings of a diplomat," observed Vail, drily.

"Oh, but Sylvia, I say!" interposed Bobby, growing red with suppressed emotion. "You know perfectly well I think you'll be sorry for this all your life. If I were a girl and had a man like Sargent coming back to me all used up by the war, and such a splendid name as he's won in service, do you think I'd turn my back on him? By Jingo, I wouldn't, then! That's all I've got to say about it, and I'm going for my ride."

"Even Bobby forsakes me," said Sylvia, dropping into melancholy as the front door closed on Hugh's advocate.

"Now, Sylvia," said Vail, in a brisk and businesslike tone, "let us lose no time in preamble. You are still resolved?"

"I am still resolved," she answered, dropping her eyes before him.

"Think again. You have borne your trial for a year—nobly and becomingly. You have lived here with Miss Hillyard, giving no one a chance to breathe a word to your discredit. In all these months, has the thought of Hugh had no softening influence? Hasn't his gallant and brilliant career in the army kindled your pride? Didn't the tears come unbidden to your eyes when you heard of his illness, and your heart bound with joy at his recovery? Above all, haven't you felt, convincingly, that not one man in fifty would have shown you such manly forbearance and generosity in all matters connected with your residence at Chelwood?"

"You know, Auntie Loo has just given me money enough to be independent. The first use I make of it is to spend no more of Sir Hugh's."

"Then, I wish the old lady had held on to her purse-strings."

"I shall probably return with her to America, where the dear old soul is longing to be."

"And pass the rest of your life in solitude?"

"I shall find some object," Sylvia answered, compressing her lips. "In forgetting self, I shall win happiness."

In her heart, she was thinking how dreadfully dreary this life she planned for herself would be. Her heart was echoing still to the appeal Vail had made to it.

"You are very young, Sylvia," Vail said, looking at her with something of wistfulness; "and your life, please God, may be a long one."

"I hope so," she said, with her vivid smile. "I love living, Kit."

"You will be lonely after such intimate companionship as you have had——"

"Don't I know it? Haven't I felt—? There, Kit, let me only say that I can't and won't stay here. It was possible, so long as Hugh kept away. Now that he's coming home, how could we live under the same roof, and be merely speaking acquaintances? It would be too hard for both of us. Therefore, I have decided that the only remedy for this embarrassment is to be legally separated, to give him a new chance, and, once and forever, set my own mind at rest."

"You are obstinate, Sylvia, under that mask of soft femininity. I have seen it in you before. Very well, then; this much is decided. Would you mind repeating to me the reasons for your rupture with your husband?"

"You *can't* have forgotten them?" she cried.

"In my legal capacity," Vail said, taking out a note-book and pencil, and looking at her in an inscrutable sort of fashion. "By the way, I believe you told me you have no knowledge whatever of the laws of divorce in England?"

"Of course not. How could I?" she said, girlishly.

"And you have placed your suit in

my hands, to be dealt with according to my best judgment and conscience?"

"Certainly."

"Please recapitulate your ideas of the causes why you and Hugh should be no longer man and wife."

"I told you," she said, with a deep, deep sigh, "about that dreadful scene with Natalie, and afterward with him, the night before he went away. Oh, Kit!"

"Courage, Sylvia. Go on!"

"No; I can't. You know it all—every bit. And you know he left Chelwood without seeing me after I left him in the garden, and that I have never seen him since."

"I believe that, if you had both had patience—particularly you—the affair would have blown over long ere this."

"Patience—when he did not deny, when he has never since denied? Oh, Kit, let us have no more of it! I cannot live over again the suffering of this year. I have myself in check now, and I mean to keep so. Set me free from Hugh—the sooner the better, for both of us."

Vail pondered for a moment before he spoke.

"Sylvia, if there were a child you loved lying ill, and she would not take any remedies proposed, and you felt sure, entirely sure you could cure her by a method—extreme, perhaps—wouldn't you——?"

There was an interruption in the person of Gibson, the butler, who came into the hall with a genteel expression of countenance.

"Beg pardon, m'lady; there's a person outside who says he has a piece of property of your ladyship's which he desires to put into your ladyship's own hands."

"What sort of a person, Gibson?" asked my lady, annoyed.

"Beg, pardon, m'lady, I am informed by the other servants that he was my predecessor in office—Hallett, by name. But I must ask you to excuse his dilapidated appearance."

"Hallett! the tool of those women!" said Sylvia, apart to Vail, a flood of red

streaming into her cheeks. "I thought we were done with him, and the like of him. What can he presume to want of me?"

"While I am here, it will do no harm to see."

"You may show Hallett in, Gibson," said Lady Sargent; and, when the man had gone, she resumed her speculations. A piece of property, some ornament lost and forgotten? Strange he should wish to return it.

"Very strange, if it's of any value," said Vail.

Gibson came back at once, followed by Hallett in shabby clothes, wearing a depressed expression, and keeping his eyes cast down.

"Hallett, m'lady," said Gibson, retiring with the expression of one who has known no sin.

"Good morning, m'lady. Good morning, Mr. Vail, sir," said a feeble echo of Hallett's once pompous voice. "I have took this liberty, impelled by the voice of conscience."

"A voice to which you had better have listened," said Vail, Lady Sargent giving no recognition of the man's presence, "before you were arrested for blackmail against your most recent employer, and sentenced to six months at hard labor."

"Oh, Mr. Vail, you are aware of the circumstances? Then, I need not enlarge on them, further than to say that I am but just emerged from my—er—enforced retirement."

"So I should have supposed. And you have stopped somewhere, by the way, to console yourself for long abstinence from the bottle. Come, man, be quick. What have you to say to her ladyship?"

"Her ladyship will, perhaps, remember the evening of the fête nearly a year ago—beautiful scene, sir, a dream of fairy-land; often has it arisen to cheer me in my hours of gloom."

"Never mind your hours of gloom," said Vail, sharply.

"Ah, sir, I have been an author, and my imagination naturally soars! That evening, Mr. Vail, just before it was time for me to announce the

supper, Sir Hugh came to me, looking vexed like, and asked me to hunt up m'lady, and give her a note he had scribbled on one of his cards."

Sylvia, interposing, spoke imperiously.

"Why did you not obey him?"

"My lady, with shame, I acknowledge that I was—to use a legal phrase, Mr. Vail—retained—by a—er—fellow-contributor whom I will not name, to give her every scrap of information concerning the private affairs of Sir Hugh and her ladyship."

"And you dare—!" cried Sylvia. "Go! Don't darken my doors again!"

"One moment, Lady Sargent," said Vail. "What became of that card, Hallett?"

Hallett took out, with deliberation, a greasy pocket-book.

"I 'ave it here, sir. The opportunity never arising to deliver it, I kept it as a memento of happier days."

"You mean you kept it, hoping somehow or other to see your way to selling it? That's what you've come here now for, isn't it?"

Hallett coughed, deprecatingly.

"Oh, Mr. Vail!"

Vail took out his own pocket-book.

"Very well. To start you on your way in the new life which I trust is awaiting you, we'll give you five pounds—not a penny more—when I am assured the note is genuine."

"Give it to me," said Sylvia; and the card was passed into her hand. With a glance, she satisfied herself of its contents.

"Well?" said Vail.

"It is genuine," she answered, walking away to look out of the window.

"There, my man, a larger sum than you deserve," said Vail, bestowing the money on Hallett. "And now, be off with you, and let us never hear of you again."

"Yes, Mr. Vail," responded Hallett, sweetly. "Oh, when I look around these halls that I nevermore may tread, how forcibly am I reminded of the poet's words:

"A sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

"Get out!" said Vail, impatiently.

"Yes, Mr. Vail. Good day, sir. Good day, m'lady."

On the threshold of the door by which he had been wont to come and go in his pride of power, the man stopped, and delivered a parting sentiment:

"I should like to say, in my own defense, that my downfall dates from my *début* as a society author!"

"Get out!" reiterated Vail.

"Well, Sylvia?" Kit said, joining her at the window-seat, and trying not to notice the tears that dimmed her eyes.

"Kit, if I had had this, it would have explained what just set me on fire with jealousy that fatal night. Hugh tells me there is a row on between Natalie's electricians, and he has to go with her to settle it. They had begun by cutting off the lights in the cedar walk, and were threatening to do so with the rest."

"Nothing more?"

"Only to ask me to keep back supper, till he could get there to take in Lady Stratharden."

She stood mournfully looking at the card.

"Doesn't that show you how easily things may be explained? Isn't there a chance that the other—the supreme cause of offense—might be also—?"

"Kit, why in God's name, didn't he say so? I'm going to talk to you as my friend, first, and afterward as my lawyer. In my first hot burst of indignation at finding that I had been tricked into marriage by Hugh and Natalie, I shut myself in my room alone. The great blow was that Hugh didn't even try to come there. He just went away from me—almost a year ago! If he loved me, why didn't he come to me? Why didn't he come to me?"

"What use would his denials have been? Sylvia, surely you believe Hugh loved you when he married you?"

"I thought so—before darkness fell."

"If he has suffered as you have,

shouldn't that bring you together now?"

"Could he have felt as I did?"

"I believe he went out to South Africa a broken-hearted, hopeless man, taking his life in his hand, and now, on the whole, rather disappointed than otherwise that he hasn't succeeded in parting with it."

"While I, to keep up appearances," cried she, passionately, "have stayed on here, hiding my misery and being forgotten by the world! I've let everybody but you and Aunt Loo and Bobby think I'm duly and properly waiting for my husband to return and take up his old place in the county and in affairs. I've gone and come with a hard little lump here where a heart should be. Now, don't try to soften me. Let me keep my hard little lump—it's better than a heart alive and quivering, longing and yearning. It'll help me to leave Chelwood that I've grown to love so dearly."

"I have done with remonstrance," said Vail, after a pause. "I mean to act according to my discretion."

"According to your discretion!" she repeated.

"And now, to business! Be so kind as to convey to me, in brief, your conception of the methods you expect to pursue in prosecuting your suit for divorce against Sargent."

Sylvia answered with animation.

"I have thought it all over, again and again. Of course, I don't *know* exactly *how*, Kit!"

"I am aware of that," Vail answered, drily.

"My idea was that, as you mightn't like to do it—plead it, argue it, whatever you call the thing—being my cousin and Hugh's friend, you might engage for me some nice, refined, considerate lawyer and a fatherly sort of judge."

"And after that?" said Vail, with difficulty suppressing his smile.

"Then, I supposed that you—" began Sylvia.

"—or the nice, refined, considerate lawyer—" interrupted Vail.

"—would draw up the papers in the case," went on Sylvia, glibly.

"Next?"

"Of course, as I said," resumed she, "I don't know the exact preliminaries. I only know that I want the thing managed so that nobody outside can have the smallest idea of what is going on."

"But your allegations against Hugh?"

"My what?" she asked, puzzled. "Oh, yes, I understand. Certainly, I want that to be stated, but with restraint. I don't want to make it too strong, you know. No need of telling all—just enough to show it is impossible for Hugh and me ever to live together again."

"The law, unfortunately, makes no bones of people's feelings. It must know all—the whole, absolute truth of what led to your rupture with your husband, and what will keep you apart from him in future."

Sylvia hung her lovely head, and blushed.

"Then, if you must, Kit, tell it—but only to the judge."

"Had you expected to appear in court, to give your own testimony against Hugh?" asked Vail, after withdrawing to gaze at one of Hugh's ancestors upon the wall.

"Oh, dear, *no*!" exclaimed she, much frightened. "Wouldn't go there for the world!"

"Suppose this, too, becomes necessary?"

"Oh, but I couldn't, Kit. Really, I couldn't. I'd be *limp* with fear. You'd have to explain it to the judge. I'm sure he would let me off."

"Some women have no such reticence."

"Oh, I know. I used to hear Natalie's friends talk of going to a divorce trial as if it were a *matinée* at the opera."

"Have you ever thought what it would be to hear your letters and Hugh's read aloud before a callous, curious audience; to have every incident of your intimate life together dragged out by the roots, and dis-

played for the amusement of the public; to have these details and the discussion of them hawked next day over all the land by the newsboys; to know that wherever you go, henceforth, you will be blazoned as the heroine of a scandal? For that's what a young woman gets, when she goes into seeking a divorce!"

"Horrible, Kit!" she said, shivering. "It makes me ill. But, of course, in my case, there'll be nothing of *that* kind! Not when you have the management of it—oh, no!"

Vail walked to and fro for a few moments, while she stood ruefully contemplating the picture he had drawn.

Finally, he came back to her. "Sylvia, I have a surprise for you. Hugh is in England!"

He never forgot the illumination of her face at that instant.

"Hugh! Hugh!" she cried, her voice thrilling. "Where is he? When will he—? Oh, I forgot!"

The illumination was extinguished as if a shade had been suddenly drawn down.

"He landed last night at Southampton. I had a letter there waiting for him, and received in return for it a wire, stating that he will reach Chelwood this afternoon."

"Is he well, quite well—not overtired by his voyage—the old wound quite healed?"

She could not keep that tell-tale thrill from her broken sentences. Vail did not trust himself to look at her.

"Quite well, it seems," he said, without emotion.

"I must hurry and tell them to have Hugh's rooms ready!" cried she, plunging into a tremor of nervous excitement. "I wonder if there's anything he ought to have to eat. Hugh can't endure beef-tea—says it might as well be baby food. Won't Bobby and Auntie Loo be astonished! How the servants and tenants will rejoice!"

"Don't trouble yourself, Sylvia," said Vail, arresting her flight. "Hugh will come here for only a short visit,

without announcing himself beforehand, keeping his fly waiting at the door."

"His fly—waiting? at this door?" gasped she.

"As soon as he hears what you and I have decided about this matter of the divorce, he will go back to town. A gentleman could do no less."

"Oh, of course!" said Sylvia, dejectedly dropping into a chair.

"And now, Sylvia, for the last of my surprises," said her cousin, watching her narrowly. "It was in order to make sure that you thoroughly understood your position in the matter of this divorce——"

"I do, *thoroughly*. You must see that."

"—that I asked you to recapitulate the instructions previously received from you—under these circumstances——"

"Yes, under the circumstances. Go on; why do you hesitate?"

"I have felt justified—I feel justified—in adopting a course of procedure I should not, perhaps, employ with another."

"How good of you, Kit!" she cried, fervently. "Go on!"

"Anxious above all things to meet your wishes at the earliest moment and in the most thorough manner possible, I have had this case conducted on the lines laid down by you."

There was a longish pause.

"Do hurry, Kit!" she said, rather pettishly.

"Owing to peculiar facilities possessed by me," he resumed, rapidly, "I was able to have the case pushed up the list of causes with quite surprising rapidity—er—er—er—it was finally set down to be heard to-day."

"To-day!" cried Sylvia, horrified.

"I shall spare you the tedious and, perhaps, incomprehensible particulars—" he went on, addressing himself, apparently, to an oak-tree seen through the window.

"But *to-day*, Kit!" interrupted she, reproachfully; "wasn't that dreadfully soon?"

"The law, my dear Lady Sargent,"

he answered, oracularly, "moves when and where it wills."

"I suppose so," said Sylvia, wiping her eyes.

Vail gathered all his courage. "I had started for the train—had reached Paddington—was, in fact, engaged in a discussion with my cabby because I had given him the exact legal fare. With sublime hauteur, he drew himself up upon his perch, money in hand, and remarked, witheringly: '*Might I harsk 'ow long you 'ave bin a-savin' up for this 'ere little treat?*'"

"Tell me the story another time," said she, without the ghost of a smile. "I'm anxious to get on."

"So was I," said Kit, warming to his task. "Looking around, I saw myself pursued by a clerk from my chambers, in a cab. He put a note into my hand. It was from the solicitor—the 'nice, refined lawyer' to whom I had entrusted the management of your exceedingly delicate affair——"

"I don't think I like his mixing up in it," said Sylvia, her lip curling.

"Neither did I. But the result justifies my confidence. By one of those curious accidents of our profession, your case had been shoved up to the very top of the list."

"Don't say shoved!" interpolated Sylvia. "It doesn't sound—respectful."

"I beg your pardon. Prepare for the greatest surprise of all. The case was heard to-day, and was decided in your favor!"

Sylvia uttered a cry. "Then—I am——?"

"What do you most desire to be?" he said, evasively. "No longer Sargent's wife?"

"Oh!" said Sylvia, blankly.

"You don't seem pleased," said Vail.

"It is, of course, a shock—being divorced," she faltered.

To Vail's relief, a diversion here occurred—no less a one than the frantic entrance of Bobby Hillyard by the front door, waving his cap, and apparently hoarse from much shouting.

"Hurray, Sylvia and Vail!" he cried. "Hugh's coming! He's nearly here!

I met his fly at the cross-roads, and the tenants had somehow got wind of his return, and were there to welcome him. They're bringing him home in triumph! Jove, but it's rippin' to talk with a man from the front! Hurray! hurray!"

In the general excitement that ensued, only Vail noticed Sylvia's face growing more pale and wan. The house servants came into the halls, as shouts were heard drawing nearer on the outside. Bobby danced a fandango of joy all by himself, and Miss Lucretia, in short gown and petticoat, ran to look over the banisters, above.

"Whatever's the matter? Is the house on fire?" called Auntie Loo.

"Hugh's coming, aunty!" answered Bobby. "Run down, and welcome Colonel Sir Hugh Sargent, of the Second Blankshire Volunteers! Welcome to the master of Chelwood! Hurray! hurray!" And, seizing a flag from the wall, he ran to wave it from the door. Miss Lucretia, scarcely less moved, ran out and stood behind him. The shouting came nearer.

"Kit, Kit, I can't meet him! Take me away!" said Sylvia, in Vail's ear.

He looked at her for a moment, with a strange expression in his eyes, a blending of pity and uncertainty. Then, as the two great doors were thrown wide open by his servants, and Sir Hugh, pale and feeble, appeared on the threshold, followed by a troop of his tenants and beneficiaries, Sylvia urged Vail again to take her from the hall.

Hugh, looking at her eagerly, yearningly, saw only that she avoided him, and clung to Vail; and, as the two disappeared within the library, the master of Chelwood felt black wrath enter into, and possess, his soul.

He hardly knew how he endured the greetings of the others, the speeches and congratulations of the older and more dignified of his tenants, who, having ranged themselves in order, in the great hall, had each to be listened to with patience, and replied to with courtesy.

Miss Hillyard and Bobby, as soon as the place was again clear of outsiders, felt that there would be scant satis-

faction in an interview with Hugh, until after he had seen Sylvia.

The old lady, especially, who cherished a secret hope that on Hugh's return things would adjust themselves between himself and Sylvia in the natural, old-fashioned way, was in the greatest hurry to bring them together speedily. She coaxed Bobby away up-stairs, and sincerely wished that she could do the same by Vail.

When, at last, he stood alone, Hugh cast one glance around him at the dear, familiar spot, and sank, physically exhausted, into a chair.

At the same moment, the door of the library opened, and Vail hastened toward him with outstretched hand.

"Hugh! dear old boy! How I've longed for this I can't begin to tell you!"

There was no answering light in Sargent's eye, and his hand was not extended in return.

"Agreeably to your instructions," he said, coldly, "I come to Chelwood for the interview with my wife, which you thought desirable. Arriving, unexpectedly, I have seen you in your attitude of consoler—that is enough. I neither wish to see Sylvia, nor to talk to you."

"Give me a hearing, Hugh," pleaded Vail, good-humoredly; but he was checked by a burst of passion.

"To the devil with your explanations!" Sargent cried. "To you, I saw her look for consolation, in the shock of my unwelcome return! You are her refuge! She is weaned from me. You are her supporter. Once, I told you to win her if you could; but I did not mean you to win away from me my wife, whom I'd trusted to you, while I was leading a dog's life, and you had all the chance. Damn you, Kit Vail, I'll kill you, if you have!"

Sylvia ran out, impetuously. The ring of her husband's voice had reached her in the library. Too well, she saw that Vail's intermediation had proved a failure. But she would not let Hugh insult them both, like that.

"Hugh," she said, breathlessly, "what you are saying is a shame to

yourself and me. Isn't it enough that you've robbed me of happiness, that you try to put this foul blot on the best friendship of my life? Kit, please don't answer—*please*. Just go into the library, till after I have spoken with Sir Hugh. Kit, I entreat you—I insist!"

Sargent, whom the exertion of his outburst had considerably weakened, lay back wearily in his chair. He felt, rather than saw, Vail withdraw at Sylvia's bidding, and spoke to her in broken sentences:

"If—I've wronged you—or Vail—I can only beg your pardon; but you must own it was a cruel home-coming. I'm a bit weak—not long off the sick-list——"

Sylvia, who had seen him only in full health, was inexpressibly distressed when, at this point, his head fell back upon the cushions of the chair—their chair, she had always thought it—and his face grew deathly pale.

In an instant, she was at his side, clasping his dear head in her arms, pleading to him to speak to his own Sylvia, and to forgive her what had passed.

As Hugh revived, he said, dreamily: "Sylvia! This is heaven!" To which, obtaining no verbal answer, he went on to murmur,

"—after long grief and pain
To feel the arms of my true love
Around me once again!"

And Sylvia, in return, clung to him, and whispered in his ear words of infinite tenderness. Poor Vail was forgotten, with all the world beside, while the lovers exchanged their joys of reunion.

Suddenly; a lightning-like thought pierced Sylvia's consciousness.

She drew away from Hugh, left a kiss unpressed, a fond word unspoken. Silent and wretched, she stole farther and farther off.

"Come back, darling. Why on earth are you leaving me? I want you to say again, 'Hugh, my own husband.'"

"I have no right!" she said, plaintively.

"Come back!" he repeated. "Ridiculous as it seems, I'm actually too shaky to come to you."

"It's dreadful, but I can't," breathed Sylvia, woebegone.

"What can you mean?"

"When you are stronger, I'll explain."

"You find you don't love me well enough?" he cried, bitterly.

"You know I *have* loved you, with all the power and passion of my youth, with the love that comes but once," she answered.

"And from the moment the precious boon came to me," he answered, solemnly, "that love was returned in fullest measure. A terrible misfortune came between us; you misjudged me, and I could not set you right. But, oh, Sylvia, wife, even if I had been what you believed me, haven't I expiated my offense?"

"Don't! don't!" she said, in trembling tones. "You make my heart ache. All you are saying of yourself, Kit has said of you, over and again, to me. He is the truest, most loyal of your friends. But, alas! I was stubborn in my belief. Nothing moved me. I thought you and I could be happy only apart from each other, and so—oh, Hugh! Hugh!"

She broke down in a flood of weeping.

"Sylvia, finish what you began to say," said her husband, sternly.

"I did—something—that has parted us forever," she answered, with a wretched face.

"What?" shouted Hugh.

"I must leave you. There is now no excuse for me to stay."

"Excuse?" he repeated.

"It would be—improper," she said, blushing.

"Improper?" shouted Sargent, louder than before.

"I can't answer anything, Hugh, if you shout at me like that! I will leave you, and go up to my room. And, oh, Hugh, when I am far away—"

"Where, may I ask, are you going?" he interrupted, sardonically.

"Probably to America," she said, trying to wipe her eyes.

"I'll come, too," he exclaimed, his face brightening; "we'll shake Auntie Loo, and go on a little bat all by ourselves!"

"Hugh, don't jest. We *can't*," she said, desperately. "Circumstances, of which you evidently know nothing, have arisen like a wall between us. But I can't tell you, I can't! Kit must. I'll fetch Kit."

As she ran into the library, returning with her cousin, Sargent said, within himself:

"I'll be hanged if I hear anything from Kit!"

Sylvia, having arraigned Kit before their common judge, appealed to him.

"Kit, Hugh must be made to understand that I am—that we are—no longer married."

"No longer married? What rubbish!" said Sargent.

"Tell him—tell him!" urged Sylvia.

"Yes, I'll tell you, dear old boy," began Vail, looking from one to the other with beaming eyes, "that, seeing your poor, self-willed little wife bent upon the destruction of her and your married happiness—and in despair of effecting a cure by any other means—I have, in order to bring Sylvia to her senses—like the 'nice, refined lawyer' that I am, Sylvia—told her an awful, absurd, impossible whopper—"

Sylvia, starting joyfully, cut him short. "Oh, Kit! then I'm not—?"

"Not in the least," he said, smiling.

Sylvia drew closer to Sargent. "I'm still—?"

"Just as much as ever you were. In fact, to judge from appearances, rather more so—if you mean Hugh's devoted wife!"

Sylvia's scream of delight brought Auntie Loo and Bobby back into the hall, and made Vail's eyes fill with some very babyish tears. Directly, her arms were again around her husband's neck, and she was crying out:

"Oh, Hugh, Hugh! I thought I was divorced. Thank God, you're mine still, and nothing on earth can part us!"

"Don't cry, Sylvia; don't cry, dear!"

said Hugh. "What all this nonsense of yours and Kit's means, I won't stop to ask, now. You are already too much upset. *Please* wipe your eyes."

"I can't," said Sylvia, feeling everywhere for her, as usual, absent handkerchief. Then, struck with a happy thought, she put her hand into Hugh's breast-pocket and possessed herself of his, using and returning it with the fervent comment:

"You would never believe how I've missed that handkerchief!"

Tears of joy dry fast, and Sylvia's face was presently again wreathed in the smiles long absent from it—smiles

that warmed Auntie Loo's old heart to look upon. Neither she nor Bobby ever knew more than the fact of the reconciliation.

Bobby was made glad by Sargent's information that he had met his father at a club in town, and been told that Bobby was soon to have a commission in the Second Blankshires.

Kit Vail, alone, going back to town by an evening train, failed to realize how he had profited by the situation. He felt himself to have played a most unthankful part in the affair.

"But, as long as Sylvia has her husband, what's the odds?" he concluded, lighting a fresh cigar.



WHERE DID LOVE GO?

WHERE did Love go? I only know that he
Unbound his wings, and boasted he was free,
And scorned my faith, and laughed to see my tears—
Though once he swore to serve me through the years,
And vowed he had no thought apart from me.

Should he return, his face I would not see,
And neither ask nor take his sympathy;
I question night and day, but no one hears,
Where did Love go?

Fool that I was, to harken to his plea,
Who showed me joy to make it mockery!
Was it another voice sang in his ears,
Traitor, the while he kissed away my fears?
Ah, Love, come back, and bid me pardon thee!
Where did Love go?

CHARLOTTE BECKER.



VERY LIKELY

"PROUDLEY is very haughty because of his descent."
"Because it's such a great one?"

ON MIDSUMMER NIGHT

By Madison Cawein

ALL the poppies in their beds,
Nodding crumpled crimson heads;
And the larkspurs, in whose ears
Twilight hangs, like twinkling tears,
Sleepy jewels of the rain;
All the violets, that strain
Eyes of amethystine gleam;
And the clover-blooms that dream
With their baby fists closed tight—
They can hear upon this night,
Noiseless as the moon's soft light,
Footsteps and the glimmering flight,
Shimmering flight,
Of the Fairies.

II

Every sturdy four-o'clock,
In its variegated frock;
Every slender sweet-pea, too,
In its hood of pearly hue;
Every primrose pale that dozes
By the wall, and slow uncloses
A sweet mouth of dewy dawn
In a little silken yawn—
On this night of silvery sheen,
They can see the Fairy Queen,
On her palfrey white, I ween,
Tread dim cirques of haunted green,
Moonlit green,
With her Fairies.

III

Never a foxglove bell, you see,
That's a cradle for a bee;
Never a lily, that's a house
Where the butterfly may drowse;
Never a rose-bud or a blossom,
That unfolds its honeyed bosom
To the moth, that nestles deep,
And there sucks itself to sleep—

THE SMART SET

But can hear and also see,
 On this night of witchery,
 All that world of Faërie,
 All that world where airily,
 Merrily,
 Dance the Fairies.

IV

It was last Midsummer Night,
 In the moon's uncertain light,
 That I stood among the flowers,
 And, in language unlike ours,
 Heard them speaking of the Pixies,
 Trolls and Gnomes and Water-Nixies;
 How in this flow'r's ear a Fay
 Hung a gem of rainy ray;
 And round that flow'r's throat had set,
 Dim, a dewdrop carcanet;
 Then among the mignonette
 Stretched a cobweb-hammock wet,
 Dewy wet,
 For the Fairies.

V

Long I watched, but never a one,
 Ariel, Puck or Oberon,
 Mab or Queen Titania—
 Fairest of them all they say—
 Clad in morning-glory hues,
 Did I glimpse among the dews.
 Only once I thought the torch
 Of that elfin-rogue and arch,
 Robin Goodfellow, afar
 Flashed along a woodland bar—
 Like a jack-o'-lantern star,
 Or a lamp of firefly spar,
 Glow-worm spar,
 Tossed by Fairies.



IN CHICAGO

MISS SMYTHE—Oh, I had such a lovely time yesterday! I went to Celia's
 silver wedding, and—

MISS TOMKYNS—Why, she hasn't been married anything like twenty-five
 years!

MISS SMYTHE—No, dear, twenty-five times.

THE BELL IN THE FOG

By Gertrude Atherton

THE great author had realized one of the dreams of his ambitious youth, the possession of an ancestral hall in England. It was not so much the good American's reverence for ancestors that inspired his longing to have his being in stately decorum among the ghosts of an ancient line, as artistic appreciation of the mellowness, the dignity, the aristocratic aloofness of walls that have sheltered, and furniture that has embraced, generations and generations of the dead. To mere wealth, only his astute and incomparably modern brain yielded respect; his ego raised its goose-flesh at the sight of rooms furnished with a single cheque, exceptional as the taste might be. The dumping of the old interiors of Europe into the glistening shells of the United States not only roused him almost to passionate protest, but offended his patriotism—which he classified among his unworked ideals. The average American was not an artist, therefore he had no excuse for even the affectation of cosmopolitanism. Heaven knew he was national enough in everything else, from his accent to his lack of repose; let his surroundings be in keeping.

Orth had left the United States soon after his first successes, and, his art being too great to be confounded with locality, he had long since ceased to be spoken of as an American author. All civilized Europe, indeed, furnished stages for his puppets, and if never picturesque nor impassioned, his originality was as overwhelming as his style. His subtleties might not always be understood—indeed, as a rule, they were not—but the musical mystery of his

language and the penetrating charm of his lofty and cultivated mind, induced raptures in the initiated, forever denied to those who failed to appreciate him.

His following was not a large one, but it was very distinguished. The aristocracies of the earth gave to it; and not to understand and admire Ralph Orth was deliberately to relegate one's self to the ranks. But the elect are few, and they frequently subscribe to the circulating libraries; on the Continent, they buy the Tauchnitz edition; and had not Mr. Orth inherited a sufficiency of ancestral dollars to enable him to keep rooms in Jermyn street, and the wardrobe of an Englishman of leisure, he might have been forced to consider the tastes of the middle-class at a desk in Hampstead. But, as it mercifully was, the fashionable and exclusive sets of London knew and sought him. He was too wary to become a fad, and too sophisticated to grate or bore; consequently, his popularity continued evenly from year to year, and long since he had come to be regarded "as one of them." He was not keenly addicted to sport, but he could handle a gun, and all men respected his dignity and breeding. They cared less for his books than women did, perhaps because patience is not a characteristic of their sex. I am alluding, however, in this instance to men-of-the-world. A group of young literary men—and one or two women—put him on a pedestal and kissed the earth before it. Naturally, they imitated him, and as this flattered him, and he had a kindly heart deep among the cere-cloths of his formalities, he sooner or later wrote

"appreciations" of them all, which nobody living could understand, but, owing to the sub-title and signature, they answered every purpose.

With all this, however, he was not utterly content. From the twelfth of August until late in the Winter—when he did not go to Homburg and the Riviera—he visited the best houses in England, slept in state chambers, and meditated in historic parks; but the country was his one passion, and he longed for his own acres.

He was turning fifty when his great-aunt died and made him her heir: "as a poor reward for his immortal services to literature," read the will of this phenomenally appreciative relative. The estate was a large one. There was a rush for his books which ran each into three new editions. He smiled with cynicism, not unmixed with sadness; but he was very grateful for the money, and, as soon as his fastidious taste would permit, he bought him a country-seat.

The place gratified all his ideals and dreams—for he had romanced about his sometime English possessions as he had never dreamed of woman. It had once been the property of the church, and the ruin of cloister and chapel above the ancient wood was sharp against the low pale sky. Even the house itself was Tudor, but wealth from generation to generation had kept it in repair; and the lawns were as velvety, the hedges as rigid, the trees as aged as any in his own works. It was not a castle nor a great property, but it was quite perfect; and for a long while he felt like a bridegroom on a succession of honeymoons. He often laid his hand against the rough ivied walls in a lingering caress.

After a time, he returned the hospitalities of his friends, and his invitations, given with the exclusiveness of his great distinction, were never refused. Americans visiting England eagerly sought for letters to him; and if they were sometimes benumbed by that cold and formal presence, and awed by the silences of Chillingsworth—the few who entered there—they thrilled at

the verbal prospect of the memory, and forthwith bought an entire set of his books. It was characteristic that they dared not ask him for his autograph.

Although women invariably described him as "brilliant," a few men affirmed that he was gentle and lovable, and any one of them was well content to spend weeks at Chillingsworth with no other companion. But, on the whole, he was rather a lonely man.

It occurred to him how lonely he was, one gay June morning when the sunlight was streaming through his narrow windows, illuminating tapestries and armor, the family portraits of the young profligate from whom he had made this splendid purchase, dusting its gold on the black wood of wainscot and floor. He was in the gallery at the moment, studying one of his two favorite portraits, a gallant little lad in the green costume of Robin Hood. The boy's expression was imperious and radiant, and he had that perfect beauty which in any disposition appealed so powerfully to the author. But as Orth stared to-day at the brilliant youth, of whose life he knew nothing, he suddenly became aware of a human stirring at the foundations of his esthetic pleasure.

"I wish he were alive and here," he thought, with a sigh. "What a jolly little companion he would be! And this fine old mansion would make a far more complimentary setting for him than for me."

He turned away, abruptly, only to find himself face to face with the portrait of a little girl who was quite unlike the boy, yet so perfect in her own way, and so unmistakably painted by the same hand, that he had long since concluded they had been brother and sister. She was angelically fair, and, young as she was—she could not have been more than six years old—her dark-blue eyes had a beauty of mind which must have been remarkable twenty years later. Her pouting mouth was like a little scarlet serpent, her skin almost transparent, her pale hair fell

waving—not curled with the orthodoxy of childhood—about her tender bare shoulders. She wore a long white frock, and clasped tightly against her breast a doll far more gorgeously arrayed than herself. Behind her were the ruins and the woods of Chillingsworth.

Orth had studied this portrait many times, for the sake of an art which he understood almost as well as his own; but to-day he saw only the lovely child. He forgot even the boy in the intensity of this new and personal absorption.

"Did she live to grow up, I wonder?" he thought. "She should have made a remarkable, even a famous woman, with those eyes and that brow, but—could the spirit within that ethereal frame stand the enlightenments of maturity? Would not that mind—purged, perhaps, in a long probation, from the dross of other existences—flee in disgust from the commonplace problems of woman's existence? Such perfect beings should die while they are still perfect. Still, it is possible that this little girl, whoever she was, was idealized by the artist, who painted into her his own dream of exquisite childhood."

Again he turned away impatiently. "I believe I am rather fond of children," he admitted. "I catch myself watching them on the street when they are pretty enough. Well, who does not like them?" he added, with some defiance.

He went back to his work; he was chiseling a story which was to be the foremost excuse of a magazine as yet unborn. At the end of half an hour he threw down his wondrous instrument—which looked not unlike an ordinary pen—and making no attempt to disobey the desire that possessed him, went back to the gallery. The dark splendid boy, the angelic little girl were all he saw—even of the several children in the gallery—and they seemed to look straight down his eyes into depths where the fragmentary ghosts of unrecorded ancestors gave faint musical response.

"The dead's kindly recognition of the dead," he thought. "But I wish these children were alive."

For a week he haunted the gallery, and the children haunted him. Then he became impatient and angry. "I am mooning like a barren woman," he exclaimed. "I must take the briefest way of getting those youngsters off my mind."

With the help of his secretary, he ransacked the library, and finally brought to light the gallery catalogue which had been named in the inventory. He discovered that his children were the Viscount Tancred and the Lady Blanche Mortlake, son and daughter of the second Earl of Teignmouth. Little wiser than before, he sat down at once and wrote to the present earl, asking for some account of the lives of the children. He awaited the answer with more restlessness than he usually permitted himself, and took long walks, ostentatiously avoiding the gallery.

"I believe those youngsters have obsessed me," he thought, more than once. "They certainly are beautiful enough, and the last time I looked at them in that waning light they were fairly alive. Would that they were, and scampering about this park."

The earl, who was intensely grateful to him, answered promptly.

"I am afraid," he wrote, "that I don't know much about my ancestors—those who didn't do something or other; but I have a vague remembrance of having been told by an aunt of mine, who lives on the family traditions—she isn't married—that the little chap was drowned in the river, and that the little girl died, too—I mean when she was a little girl—wasted away, or something—I'm such a beastly idiot about expressing myself, that I wouldn't dare to write to you at all if you weren't really great. That is actually all I can tell you, and I am afraid the painter was their only biographer."

The author was gratified that the girl had died young, but grieved for the boy. Although he had avoided the

gallery of late, his practised imagination had evoked from the throngs of history the high-handed and brilliant, surely adventurous career of the third Earl of Teignmouth. He had pondered upon the deep delights of directing such a mind and character, and had caught himself envying the dust that was older still. When he read of the lad's early death, in spite of his regret that such promise should have come to naught, he admitted to a secret thrill of satisfaction that the boy had so soon ceased to belong to any one. Then, he smiled with both sadness and humor.

"What an old fool I am!" he admitted. "I believe I not only wish those children were alive, but that they were my own."

The frank admission proved fatal. He made straight for the gallery. The boy, after the interval of separation, seemed more spiritedly alive than ever, the little girl to suggest, with her faint appealing smile, that she would like to be taken up and cuddled.

"I must try another way," he thought, desperately, after that long communion. "I must write them out of me."

He went back to the library and locked up the *tour de force* which had ceased to command his classic faculty. At once, he began to write the story of the brief lives of the children, much to the amazement of that faculty, which was little accustomed to the simplicities. Nevertheless, before he had written three chapters, he knew that he was at work upon a masterpiece—and more; that he was experiencing a pleasure so keen that once and again his hand trembled, and he saw the page through a mist. Although his characters had always been, in a measure, realized by himself and his more patient readers, none knew better than he—a man of no delusions—that they were but mentalities, not the pulsing, living creations of the more full-blooded genius. But he had been content to have it so. His creations might find and leave him cold, but he had known his highest satisfaction in

chiseling the statuettes, extracting subtle and elevating harmonies, while combining words as no man of his tongue had combined them before.

But the children were not puppets. He had loved and brooded over them long ere he had thought to tuck them into his pen, and on its first stroke they danced out alive. The old mansion echoed with their laughter, with their delightful and original pranks; Mr. Orth knew nothing of children; therefore, all the pranks he invented were as original as his faculty. The little girl clung to his hand or knee as they both followed the adventurous course of their common idol, the boy. When he realized how alive they were he opened each room of the house to them in turn, that evermore he might have sacred and poignant memories with all parts of the habitation where he must dwell alone to the end. He selected their bedrooms, and hovered over them—not through infantile disorders, which were beyond even his imagination, but through those painful intervals incident upon the enterprising spirit of the boy and the devoted obedience of the girl to fraternal command. He ignored the second Earl of Teignmouth; he was himself their father, and he admired himself extravagantly for the first time; art had chastened him long since. Oddly enough, the children had no mother, not even the memory of one.

He wrote the book more slowly than was his wont, and spent delightful hours pondering upon the chapter of the morrow. He looked forward to the conclusion with a sort of terror, and made up his mind that when the inevitable last word was written he would start at once for Homburg. Incalculable times a day he went to the gallery, for he no longer had any desire to write the children out of his mind, and his eyes hungered for them. They were his now. It was with an effort that he sometimes humorously reminded himself that another man had fathered them and that their little skeletons were under the choir of the chapel. Not even for peace of mind

would he have descended into the vaults of the lords of Chillingsworth and looked upon the marble effigies of his children. Nevertheless, when in a super-humorous mood, he dwelt upon his high satisfaction in having been enabled by his great-aunt to purchase all that was left of them.

For two months he lived in his fool's paradise, and then he knew that the book must end. He nerved himself to nurse the little girl through her wasting illness, and when he clasped her hands, his own shook, his knees trembled. Desolation settled upon the house, and he wished he had left one corner of it to which he could retreat unhaunted by the child's presence. He took long tramps, avoiding the river with a sensation next to panic. It was two days before he got back to his table, and then he had made up his mind to let the boy live. To kill him off, too, was more than his augmented stock of human nature could endure. After all, the lad's death had been purely accidental, wanton. It was just that he should live—with one of the author's inimitable suggestions of future greatness; but, at the end, the parting was almost as bitter as the other. Orth knew then how men feel when their sons go forth to encounter the world and ask no more of the old companionship.

The author's boxes were packed. He sent the manuscript to his publisher an hour after it was finished—he could not have given it a final reading to have saved it from failure—directed his secretary to examine the proof under a microscope, and left the next morning for Homburg. There, in inmost circles, he forgot his children. He visited in several of the great houses of the Continent until November; then returned to London to find his book the literary topic of the day. His secretary handed him the reviews; and for once he read the finalities of the nameless. He found himself hailed as a genius, and compared in astonished phrases to the prodigiously clever talent which the world for twenty years had isolated under the name of Ralph

Orth. This pleased him, for every writer is human enough to wish to be hailed as a genius, and immediately. Many are, and many wait; it depends upon the fashion of the moment, and the needs and bias of those who write of writers. Orth had waited twenty years; but his pathway was strewn with the head-stones of geniuses long since forgotten. He was gratified to come thus publicly into his estate, but soon reminded himself that all the adulation of which a belated world was capable could not give him one thrill of the pleasure which the companionship of that book had given him, while creating. It was the keenest pleasure in his memory, and when a man is fifty and has written many books, that is saying a great deal.

He allowed what society was in town to lavish honors on him for something over a month, then, canceled all his engagements and went down to Chillingsworth.

His estate was in Hertfordshire, that county of gentle hills and tangled lanes, of ancient oaks and wide wild heaths, of historic houses, and dark woods, and green fields innumerable—a Wordsworthian shire, steeped in the deepest peace of England. As Orth drove toward his own gates he had the typical English sunset to gaze upon, a red streak with a church spire against it. His woods were silent. In the fields, the cows stood as if conscious of their part. The ivy on his old gray towers had been young with his children.

He spent a haunted night, but the next day stranger happenings began.

II

HE rose early, and went for one of his long walks. England seems to cry out to be walked upon, and Orth, like others of the transplanted, experienced to the full the country's gift of foot-restlessness and mental calm. Calm flees, however, when the ego is rampant, and to-day, as upon others too recent, Orth's soul was as

restless as his feet. He had walked for two hours when he entered the wood of his neighbor's estate, a domain seldom honored by him, as it, too, had been bought by an American—a flighty hunting widow, who displeased the fastidious taste of the author. He heard children's voices, and turned with the quick prompting of retreat.

As he did so, he came face to face on the narrow path with a little girl. For the moment he was possessed by the most hideous sensation which can visit a man's being—abject terror. He believed that body and soul were disintegrating. The child before him was his child, the original of a portrait in which the artist, dead two centuries ago, had missed exact fidelity, after all. The difference, even his rolling vision took note, lay in the warm pure living whiteness and the deeper spiritual suggestion of the child in the path. Fortunately for his self-respect, his surrender lasted but a moment. The little girl spoke.

"You look real sick," she said. "Shall I lead you home?"

The voice was soft and sweet, but the intonation, the vernacular, were American, and not of the highest class. The shock was, if possible, more agonizing than the other, but this time Orth rose to the occasion.

"Who are you?" he demanded, with asperity. "What is your name? Where do you live?"

The child smiled, an angelic smile, although she was evidently amused. "I never had so many questions asked me all at once," she said. "But I don't mind, and I'm glad you're not sick. I'm Mrs. Jennie Root's little girl—my father's dead. My name is Blanche—you *are* sick! No?—and I live in Rome, New York state. We've come over here to visit pa's relations."

Orth took the child's hand in his. It was very warm and soft.

"Take me to your mother," he said, firmly; "now, at once. You can return and play afterward. And as I wouldn't have you disappointed for

the world, I'll send to town to-day for a beautiful doll."

The little girl, whose face had fallen, flashed her delight, but walked with great dignity beside him. He groaned in his depths as he saw that they were pointing for the widow's house, but made up his mind that he would know the history of the child and of all her ancestors, if he had to sit down at table with his obnoxious neighbor. To his surprise, however, the child did not lead him into the park, but toward one of the old stone houses of the tenantry.

"Pa's great-great-great-grandfather lived there," she remarked, with all an American's pride of ancestry. Orth did not smile, however. Only the warm clasp of the hand in his, the soft thrilling voice of his still mysterious companion, prevented him from feeling as if moving through the mazes of one of his own famous ghost stories.

The child ushered him into the dining-room, where an old man was seated at the table reading his Bible. The room was at least eight hundred years old. The ceiling was supported by the trunk of a tree, black, and probably petrified. The windows had still their diamond panes, separated, no doubt, by the original lead. Beyond was a large kitchen in which were several women. The old man, who looked patriarchal enough to have laid the foundations of his dwelling, glanced up and regarded the visitor without hospitality. His expression softened as his eyes moved to the child.

"Who 'ave ye brought?" he asked. He removed his spectacles. "Ah!" He rose, and offered the author a chair. At the same moment, the women entered the room.

"Of course you've fallen in love with Blanche, sir," said one of them. "Everybody does."

"Yes, that is it. Quite so." Confusion still prevailing among his faculties, he clung to the naked truth. "This little girl has interested and startled me because she bears a precise resemblance to one of the portraits in Chillingsworth—painted about

two hundred years ago. Such extraordinary likenesses do not occur without reason, as a rule, and, as I admired my portrait so deeply that I have written a story about it, you will not think it unnatural if I am more than curious to discover the reason for this resemblance. The little girl tells me that her ancestors lived in this very house, and as my little girl lived next door, so to speak, there undoubtedly is a natural reason for the resemblance."

His host closed the Bible, put his spectacles in his pocket, and hobbled out of the house.

"He'll never talk of family secrets," said an elderly woman, who introduced herself as the old man's daughter, and had placed bread and milk before the guest. "There are secrets in every family, and we have ours, but he'll never tell those old tales. All I can tell you is that an ancestor of little Blanche went to wreck and ruin because of some fine lady's doings, and killed himself. The story is that his boys turned out bad. One of them saw his crime, and never got over the shock; he was foolish like, after. The mother was a poor scared sort of creature, and hadn't much influence over the other boy. There seemed to be a blight on all the man's descendants, until one of them went to America. Since then, they haven't prospered, exactly, but they've done better, and they don't drink so heavy."

"They haven't done so well," remarked a worn patient-looking woman. Orth typed her as belonging to the small middle-class of an interior town of the eastern United States.

"You are not the child's mother?"

"Yes, sir. Everybody is surprised; you needn't apologize. She doesn't look like any of us, although her brothers and sisters are good enough for anybody to be proud of. But we all think she strayed in by mistake, for she looks like any lady's child, and, of course, we're only middle-class."

Orth gasped. It was the first time he had ever heard a native American use the term middle-class with a per-

sonal application. For the moment, he forgot the child. His analytical mind raked in the new specimen. He questioned, and learned that the woman's husband had kept a hat-store in Rome, New York; that her boys were clerks, her girls in stores, or type-writing. They kept her and little Blanche—who had come after her other children were well grown—in comfort; and they were all very happy together. The boys broke out, occasionally; but, on the whole, were the best in the world, and her girls were worthy of far better than they had. All were robust, except Blanche. "She coming so late, when I was no longer young, makes her delicate," she remarked, with a slight blush, the signal of her chaste Americanism; "but I guess she'll get along all right. She couldn't have better care if she was a queen's child."

Orth, who had gratefully consumed the bread and milk, rose. "Is that really all you can tell me?" he asked.

"That's all," replied the daughter of the house. "And you couldn't pry open father's mouth."

Orth shook hands cordially with all of them, for he could be charming when he chose. He offered to escort the little girl back to her playmates in the wood, and she took prompt possession of his hand. As he was leaving, he turned suddenly to Mrs. Root. "Why did you call her Blanche?" he asked.

"She was so white and dainty, she just looked it."

Orth took the next train for London, and from the Earl of Teignmouth obtained the address of the aunt who lived on the family traditions, and a cordial note of introduction to her. He then spent an hour anticipating, in a toy-shop, the whims and pleasures of a child—an incident of paternity which his book-children had not inspired. He bought the finest doll, piano, French dishes, cooking apparatus, and playhouse in the shop, and signed a cheque for thirty pounds with a sensation of positive rapture. Then he took the train for Lancashire,

where the Lady Mildred Mortlake lived in another ancestral home.

Possibly there are few imaginative writers who have not a leaning, secret or avowed, to the occult. The creative gift is in very close relationship with the Great Force behind the universe; for aught we know, each may be an atom thereof. It is not strange, therefore, that the lesser and closer of the unseen forces should send their vibrations to it occasionally; or, at all events, that the imagination should incline its ear to the most mysterious and picturesque of all beliefs. Orth frankly dallied with the old dogma. He formulated no personal faith of any sort, but his creative faculty, that ego within an ego, had made more than one excursion into the invisible and brought back literary treasure.

The Lady Mildred received with sweetness and warmth the generous contributor to the family sieve, and listened with fluttering interest to all he had not told the world—she had read the book—and to the strange, Americanized sequel.

"I am all at sea," concluded Orth. "What had my little girl to do with the tragedy? What relation was she to the lady who drove the young man to destruction—?"

"The closest," interrupted Lady Mildred. "She was herself!"

Orth stared at her. Again he had a confused sense of disintegration. Lady Mildred, gratified by the success of her bolt, proceeded less dramatically:

"Wally was up here just after I read your book, and I discovered he had given you the wrong history of the picture. Not that he knew it. It is a story we have left untold as often as possible, and I tell it to you only because you would probably become a monomaniac if I didn't. Blanche Mortlake—that Blanche—there had been several of her name, but there has not been one since—did not die in childhood, but lived to be twenty-four. She was an angelic child, but little angels sometimes grow up into very naughty girls. I believe she was deli-

cate as a child, which probably gave her that spiritual look. Perhaps she was spoiled and flattered, until her poor little soul was stifled, which is likely. At all events, she was the coquette of her day—she seemed to care for nothing but breaking hearts; and she did not stop when she married, either. She hated her husband, and became reckless. She had no children. So far, the tale is not an uncommon one; but the worst, and what makes the ugliest stain in our annals, is to come.

"She was alone one Summer at Chillingsworth—where she had taken temporary refuge from her husband—and she amused herself—some say, fell in love—with a young man of the yeomanry, a tenant of the next estate. His name was Root. He, so it comes down to us, was a magnificent specimen of his kind, and in those days the yeomanry gave us our great soldiers. His beauty of face was quite as remarkable as his physique; he led all the rural youth in sport, and was a bit above his class in every way. He had a wife in no way remarkable, and two little boys, but was always more with his friends than his family. Where he and Blanche Mortlake met I don't know—in the woods, probably, although it has been said that he had the run of the house. But, at all events, he was wild about her, and she pretended to be about him. Perhaps she was, for women have stooped before and since. Some women can be stormed by a fine man in any circumstances; but, although I am a woman of the world, and not easy to shock, there are some things I tolerate so hardly that it is all I can do to bring myself to believe in them; and stooping is one of them. Well, they were the scandal of the county for months, and then, either because she had tired of her new toy, or his grammar grated after the first glamour, or because she feared her husband, who was returning from the Continent, she broke off with him and returned to town. He followed her, and forced his way into her house. It is said she melted, but made

him swear never to attempt to see her again. He returned to his home, and killed himself. A few months later she took her own life. That is all I know."

"It is quite enough for me," said Orth.

The next night, as his train traveled over the great wastes of Lancashire, a thousand chimneys were spouting forth columns of fire. Where the sky was not red it was black. The place looked like hell. Another time Orth's imagination would have gathered immediate inspiration from this wildest region of England. The fair and peaceful counties of the south had nothing to compare in infernal grandeur with these acres of flaming columns. The chimneys were invisible in the lower darkness of the night; the fires might have leaped straight from the angry caldron of the earth.

But Orth was in a subjective world, searching for all he had ever heard of occultism. He recalled that the sinful dead are doomed, according to this belief, to linger for vast reaches of time in that borderland which is close to earth, eventually sent back to work out their final salvation; that they work it out among the descendants of the people they have wronged; that suicide is held by the devotees of occultism to be a cardinal sin, abhorred and execrated.

Authors are far closer to the truths enfolded in mystery than ordinary people, because of that very audacity of imagination which irritates their plodding critics. As only those who dare to make mistakes succeed greatly, only those who shake free the wings of their imagination brush, once in a way, the secrets of the great pale world. If such writers go wrong, it is not for the mere brains to tell them so.

Upon Orth's return to Chillingsworth, he called at once upon the child, and found her happy among his gifts. She put her arms about his neck, and covered his serene unlined face with soft kisses. This completed the conquest. Orth from that moment adored her as a child, irrespective of the psychological problem.

Aug. 1903

Gradually, he managed to monopolize her. From long walks it was but a step to take her home for luncheon. The hours of her visits lengthened. He had a room fitted up as a nursery and filled with the wonders of toyland. He took her to London to see the pantomimes; two days before Christmas, to buy presents for her relatives; and together they strung them upon the most wonderful Christmas tree that the old hall of Chillingsworth had ever embraced. She had a donkey-cart and a trained nurse, disguised as a maid, to wait upon her. Before a month had passed she was living in state at Chillingsworth and paying daily visits to her mother. Mrs. Root was deeply flattered, and apparently well content. Orth told her plainly that he should make the child independent, and educate her, meanwhile. Mrs. Root intended to spend six months in England, and Orth was in no hurry to alarm her by broaching his ultimate design.

He reformed Blanche's accent and vocabulary, and read to her out of books which would have addled the brains of most little maids of six, but she seemed to enjoy them, although she seldom made a comment. He was always ready to play games with her, but she was a gentle little thing, and, moreover, tired easily. She preferred to sit in the depths of a big chair, toasting her bare toes at the log-fire in the hall, while her friend read or talked to her. Although she was thoughtful, and, when left to herself, given to dreaming, his patient observation could detect nothing uncanny about her. Moreover, she had a quick sense of humor, she was easily amused, and could laugh as merrily as any child in the world. He was resigning all hope of further development on the shadowy side when one day he took her to the picture gallery.

It was the first warm day of Summer. The gallery was not heated, and he had not dared to take his frail visitor into its chilly spaces during the Winter and Spring. Although he had wished to see the effect of the pic-

ture on the child, he had shrunk from the bare possibility of the very development the mental part of him craved; the other was warmed and satisfied for the first time in his life, and withheld itself from disturbance. But one day the sun streamed through the old windows, and, obeying a sudden impulse, he led Blanche to the gallery.

It was some time before he approached the child of his earlier love. Again he hesitated. He pointed out many other fine pictures, and Blanche smiled appreciatively at his remarks, that were wise in criticism and interesting in matter. He never knew just how much she understood, but the very fact that there were depths in the child beyond his probing riveted his chains.

Suddenly, he wheeled about and waved his hand to her prototype. "What do you think of that?" he asked. "You remember, I told you of the likeness the day I met you."

She looked indifferently at the picture, but he noticed that her color changed oddly; its pure white tone gave place to an equally delicate gray.

"I have seen it before," she said. "I came in here one day to look at it. And I have been quite often since. You never forbade me," she added, looking at him appealingly, but dropping her eyes quickly. "And I like the little girl—and the boy—very much."

"Do you? Why?"

"I don't know"—a formula in which she had taken refuge before. Still her candid eyes were lowered; but she was quite calm. Orth, instead of questioning, merely fixed his eyes upon her, and waited. In a moment she stirred uneasily, but she did not laugh nervously, as another child would have done. He had never seen her self-possession ruffled, and he had begun to doubt he ever should. She was full of human warmth and affection. She seemed made for love, and every creature who came within her ken adored her, from the author himself down to the litter of puppies presented to her by the stable-boy a few weeks

since; but her serenity would hardly be enhanced by death.

She raised her eyes, finally, but not to his. She looked at the portrait.

"Did you know that there was another picture behind?" she asked.

"No," replied Orth, turning cold. "How did you know it?"

"One day I touched a spring in the frame, and this picture came forward. Shall I show you?"

"Yes!" And crossing curiosity and the involuntary shrinking from impending phenomena was a sensation of esthetic disgust that he should be treated to a secret spring.

The little girl touched hers, and that other Blanche sprang aside so quickly that she might have been impelled by a sharp blow from behind. Orth narrowed his eyes and stared at what she revealed. He felt that his own Blanche was watching him, and set his features, although his breath was short.

There was the Lady Blanche Mortlake in the splendor of her young womanhood, beyond a doubt. Gone were all traces of her spiritual childhood, except, perhaps, in the shadows of the mouth; but more than fulfilled were the promises of her mind. Assuredly, the woman had been as brilliant and gifted as she had been restless and passionate. She wore her very pearls with arrogance, her very hands were tense with eager life, her whole being breathed mutiny.

Orth turned abruptly to Blanche, who had transferred her attention to the picture.

"What a tragedy is there!" he exclaimed, with a fierce attempt at lightness. "Think of a woman having all that pent up within her two centuries ago! And at the mercy of a stupid family, no doubt, and a still stupider husband. No wonder—To-day, a woman like that might not be a model of all the virtues, but she certainly would use her gifts and become famous, the while living her life too fully to have any place in it for yeomen and such, or even for the trivial business of breaking hearts." He put his finger under Blanche's chin, and raised her face,

but he could not compel her gaze. "You are the exact image of that little girl," he said, "except that you are even purer and finer. She had no chance, none whatever. You live in the woman's age. Your opportunities will be infinite. I shall see to it that they are. What you wish to be you shall be. There will be no pent-up energies here to burst out into disaster for yourself and others. You shall be trained to self-control—that is, if you ever develop self-will, dear child—every faculty shall be educated, every school of life you desire knowledge through shall be opened to you. You shall become that finest flower of civilization, a woman who knows how to use her independence."

She raised her eyes, slowly, and gave him a look which stirred the roots of sensation—a long look of unspeakable melancholy. Her chest rose once; then, she set her lips tightly, and dropped her eyes.

"What do you mean?" he cried, roughly, for his soul was chattering. "Is—it—do you—?" He dared not go too far, and concluded lamely, "You mean you fear that your mother will not give you to me when she goes—you have divined that I wish to adopt you? Answer me, will you?"

But she only lowered her head and turned away, and he, fearing to frighten or repel her, apologized for his abruptness, restored the outer picture to its place and led her from the gallery.

He sent her at once to the nursery, and when she came down to luncheon and took her place at his right hand, she was as natural and childlike as ever. For some days he restrained his curiosity, but one evening, as they were sitting before the fire in the hall listening to the storm, and just after he had told her the story of the erlking, he took her on his knee and asked her gently if she would not tell him what had been in her thoughts when he had drawn her brilliant future. Again her face turned gray, and she dropped her eyes.

"I cannot," she said. "I—perhaps—I don't know."

"Was it what I suggested?"

She shook her head, then looked at him with a shrinking appeal which forced him to drop the subject.

He went the next day alone to the gallery, and looked long at the portrait of the woman. She stirred no response in him. Nor could he feel that the woman of Blanche's future would stir the man in him. The paternal was all he had to give, but that was hers for ever.

He went out into the park and found Blanche digging in her garden, very dirty and absorbed. The next afternoon, however, entering the hall noiselessly, he saw her sitting in her big chair, gazing out into nothing visible, her whole face settled in melancholy. He asked her if she were ill, and she recalled herself at once, but confessed to feeling tired. Soon after this he noticed that she lingered longer in the comfortable depths of her chair, and seldom went out, except with himself. She insisted that she was quite well, but after he had surprised her again looking as sad as if she had renounced every joy of childhood, he invited from London a doctor renowned for his success with children.

The scientist came and questioned and examined her. When she had left the room he shrugged his shoulders.

"She might have been born with ten years of life in her, or she might grow up into a buxom woman," he said. "I confess I cannot tell. She appears to be sound enough, but I have no X-rays in my eyes, and for all I know she may be on the verge of decay. She certainly has the look of those who die young. I have never seen so spiritual a child. But I can put my finger on nothing. Keep her out of doors, don't give her sweets, and don't let her catch anything if you can help it."

Orth and the child spent the long warm days of Summer under the trees of the park, or driving in the quiet lanes. Guests were unbidden, and his pen was idle. All that was human in

him had gone out to Blanche. He loved her, and she was a perpetual delight to him. The rest of the world received the large measure of his indifference. There was no further change in her, and apprehension slept and let him sleep. He had persuaded Mrs. Root to remain in England for a year. He sent her theatre tickets every week, and placed a horse and phaeton at her disposal. She was enjoying herself and seeing less and less of Blanche. He took the child to Bournemouth for a fortnight, and again to Scotland, both of which outings benefited as much as they pleased her. She had begun to tyrannize over him amiably, and she carried herself quite royally. But she was always sweet and truthful, and these qualities, combined with that something in the depths of her mind which defied his explorations, held him captive. She was devoted to him, and cared for no other companion, although she was demonstrative to her mother when they met.

It was in the tenth month of this idyll of the lonely man and the lonely child that Mrs. Root flurriedly entered the library of Chillingsworth, where Orth happened to be alone.

"Oh, sir," she exclaimed, "I must go home. My daughter Grace writes me—she should have done it before—that the boys are not behaving as well as they should—she didn't tell me, as I was having such a good time she just hated to worry me—heaven knows I've had enough worry—but now I must go—I just couldn't stay—boys are an awful responsibility—girls ain't a circumstance to them, although mine are a handful sometimes."

Orth had written about too many women to interrupt the flow. He let her talk until she paused to recuperate her forces. Then, he said, quietly:

"I am sorry this has come so suddenly, for it forces me to broach a subject, at once, which I would rather have postponed until you could have accustomed yourself to the idea by degrees—"

"I know what it is you want to say, sir," she broke in, "and I've reproached

myself that I haven't warned you before, but I didn't like to be the one to speak first. You want Blanche—of course, I couldn't help seeing that; but I can't let her go, sir, indeed, I can't."

"Yes," he said, firmly, "I want to adopt Blanche, and I hardly think you can refuse, for you must know how greatly it will be to her advantage. She is a wonderful child; you have never been blind to that; she should have every opportunity, not only of money, but of association. If I adopt her legally, I shall, of course, make her my heir, and—there is no reason why she should not grow up as great a lady as any in England."

The poor woman turned white, and burst into tears. "I've sat up nights and nights, struggling," she said, when she could speak. "That, and missing her. I couldn't stand in her light, and I let her stay. I know I oughtn't to, now—I mean, stand in her light—but, sir, she is dearer than all the others put together."

"Then, live here in England—at least, for some years longer. I will gladly relieve your children of your support, and you can see Blanche as often as you choose."

"I can't do that, sir. After all, she is only one, and there are six others. I can't desert them. They all need me, if only to keep them together—three girls unmarried and out in the world, and three boys just a little inclined to be wild. There is another point, sir—I don't exactly know how to say it."

"Well?" asked Orth, kindly. This American woman thought him the ideal gentleman, although the mistress of the estate on which she visited called him a boor and a snob.

"It is—well—you must know—you can imagine—that her brothers and sisters just worship Blanche. They save their pennies to buy her everything she wants—or used to want. Heaven knows what will satisfy her now, although I can't see that she's one bit spoiled. But she's just like a religion to them; they're not much on church. I'll tell you, sir, what I

couldn't say to any one else, not even to these relations who've been so kind to me—but there's wildness, just a streak, in all my children, and I believe, I know, it's Blanche that keeps them straight. My girls get bitter, sometimes; work all the week and little fun, not caring for common men and no chance to marry gentlemen; and sometimes they break out and talk dreadful; then, when they're over it, they say they'll live for Blanche—they've said it over and over, and they mean it. Every sacrifice they've made for her—and they've made many—has done them good. It isn't that Blanche ever says a word of the preachy sort, or has anything of the Sunday-school child about her, or even tries to smooth them down when they're excited. It's just herself. The only thing she ever does is sometimes to draw herself up and look scornful, and that nearly kills them. Little as she is, they're crazy about having her respect. I've grown superstitious about her. Until she came I used to get frightened, terribly, sometimes, and I believe she came for that. So—you see! I know Blanche is too fine for us and ought to have the best; but, then, they are to be considered, too. They have their rights, and they've got much more good than bad in them. I don't know! I don't know! It's kept me awake many nights."

Orth rose, abruptly. "Perhaps you will take some further time to think it over," he said. "You can stay a few weeks longer—the matter cannot be so pressing as that."

The woman rose. "I've thought this," she said; "let Blanche decide. I believe she knows more than any of us. I believe that whichever way she decided would be right. I won't say anything to her, so you won't think I'm working on her feelings; and I can trust you. But she'll know."

"Why do you think that?" asked Orth, sharply. "There is nothing uncanny about the child. She is not yet seven years of age. Why should you place such a responsibility upon her?"

"Do you think she's like other children?"

"I know nothing of other children."

"I do, sir. I've raised six. And I've seen hundreds of others. I never was one to be a fool about my own, but Blanche isn't like any other child living—I'm certain of it."

"What do you think?"

And the woman answered, according to her lights: "I think she's an angel, and came to us because we needed her."

"And I think she is Blanche Mortlake working out the last of her salvation," thought the author; but he made no reply, and was alone in a moment.

It was several days before he spoke to Blanche, and then, one morning, when she was sitting on her mat on the lawn with the light full upon her, he told her abruptly that her mother must return home.

To his surprise, but unutterable delight, she burst into tears and flung herself into his arms.

"You need not leave me," he said, when he could find his own voice. "You can stay here always and be my little girl. It all rests with you."

"I can't stay!" she sobbed. "I can't!"

"And that is what made you so sad once or twice?" he asked, with a double eagerness.

She made no reply.

"Oh!" he said, passionately, "give me your confidence, Blanche. You are the only breathing thing that I have ever loved."

"If I could, I would," she said. "But I don't know—not quite."

"How much do you know?"

But she sobbed again, and would not answer. He dared not risk too much. After all, the physical barrier between the past and the present was very young.

"Very well, then, we will talk about the other matter. I will not pretend to disguise the fact that your mother is distressed at the idea of parting from you, and thinks it would be as

sad for your brothers and sisters, whom she says you influence for their good. Do you think that you do?"

"Yes."

"How do you know this?"

"Do you know why you know everything?"

"No, my dear, and I have great respect for your instincts. But your sisters and brothers are now old enough to take care of themselves. They must be of poor stuff if they cannot live properly without the aid of a child. Moreover, they will be marrying soon. That will also mean that your mother will have many little grandchildren to console her for your loss. I will be the one bereft, if you leave me. I am the only one who really needs you. I don't say I will go to the bad, as you may have very foolishly persuaded yourself your family will do without you, but I trust to your instincts to make you realize how unhappy, how inconsolable, I shall be. I shall be the loneliest man on earth. And without hope!"

She rubbed her face deeper into his flannels, and tightened her embrace. "Can't you come, too?" she asked.

"No; you must live with me wholly, or not at all. Your people are not my people, their ways are not my ways. We should not get along. And if you lived with me over there you might as well stay here, for your influence over them would be quite as removed. Moreover, if they are of the right stuff the memory of you will be quite as potent for good as your actual presence."

"Not unless I died."

Again, something within him trembled. "Do you believe you are going to die young?" he blurted out.

But she would not answer.

He entered the nursery abruptly the next day and found her packing her dolls. When she saw him, she sat down and began to weep hopelessly. He knew then that his fate was sealed. And when, a year later, he received her last little scrawl, he was almost glad that she went when she did.



TRAGEDY

ONLY a simple woman she, whom Love,
In some sad, listless way, grew weary of.

So plain the fact, so commonplace the thing,
Empty and cheap and void of coloring.

Yet all the tragedies of earth, I wis,
Have nothing in their wounds that hurt like this.

No grand, sharp blow, sudden to ease the pain;
Only the ceaseless ache of heart and brain.

The uselessness of toil and life and soul—
A causeless journey to a dreary goal.

Only a simple woman she, whom Love
Waxed weary of.

McCREA PICKERING.



AT his own wedding a man is never the best man—and but rarely afterward.

THE WIRE-TAPPERS

By Arthur Stringer

THE discharged prisoner hung back, blinking out at the strong sunlight. When the way at last seemed clear, he thrust his hands deep in his pockets, and sauntered carelessly toward Sixth avenue. At the corner, a crowd of idlers watched two men on a scaffolding, cleaning the stone of Jefferson Market with a sand-blast. It was not until he had shuffled his way in on one side of this crowd, and edged circuitously out on the other that he felt at ease with the world. It was like dipping into a stream; it seemed to wash away something scarlet and flaming. A touch of the familiar bravado came back to his boyish face; each insouciant shoulder took on its old line of reckless amiability.

He crossed Sixth avenue with quicker steps, and pushed his way into a saloon on the corner of Tenth street, vaguely wondering what the next turn of life's wheel would bring to him. But, at heart, he was still sick and shaken and weak. He called for a beer, and, between gulps of it, swallowed down slices of pickled beets and the last of the free-lunch bread and crackers. Seeing the bartender eying him angrily, he laughed, conciliatingly, and put down his last nickel for another beer.

It was not until then that he noticed the stranger beside him, looking at him pointedly. He was corpulent, and friendly enough of face, but for the blocked squareness of the flaccid jaw and the indefinite pale-green glint to the deep-set, predatory eyes. He was floridly dressed, with a heavy, chased-gold band on one fat finger, and a small, diamond stud in his shirt-front. There was, too, something beefily ani-

mal-like in his confident, massive neck, and the discharged prisoner returned his half-quizzical gaze of inspection with a glare unmistakably belligerent. The stranger merely smiled, and leaned amiably against the bar.

"What'll you have, Durkin?" he asked, easily.

The other still glared at him in silence.

"Climb down, my boy; climb down, and have something with me!"

"Who're *you*, anyway?" demanded Durkin, coldly.

"Oh, I was just watchin' you over yonder!" The stout man jerked his head vaguely toward Jefferson Market, and turned to the bartender. "Give us some brandy, Terry, and a plate o' hot beans and sandwiches. Yes, I was kind o' lookin' on over there; you're up against it, aren't you?"

"How d'you mean?" asked the young man, hungrily eying the leg of ham, from which the bartender was shaving dolefully thin slices.

"Here, brace up on a swig of Terry's nose-paint; then we can talk easier. Hold on, though; let's get comfortable!"

He ordered the lunch over to a little round table in the corner. Durkin could already feel the liquor singing through his veins; and he decided to get some hot beans inside him before trying to break away.

"Now, first thing, do you want a cinch on a good job?"

"Maybe," said Durkin, through a mouthful of beans. "Doing what?"

"Same old thing—operating, of course."

Durkin hated to fall out with the

stranger while that plate of steaming beans stood still unconsumed; so, he parried for time.

"I'm kind o' sick of operating," he mumbled, washing a mouthful of his lunch down with a glass of brandy. "My arm's giving out."

"Well, I want a man, and I want him quick. You're not very well fixed, maybe?"

"Oh, I'm broke, all right!" laughed the other, weakly, surrendering to some clutching tide of alcoholic recklessness.

"Well, you're a fool to go broke in the teeth of a cinch like this. But first thing, how'd you ever get pinched by Doogan? Here, take a drink—hot stuff, eh? Now, how'd you get pulled that fool way?"

"Oh, I'd been living like a street-cat for a week," said Durkin, wiping his mouth; "and a friend of mine showed me a wire back of his roof, and advanced me five dollars to short-circuit it. Doogan's men caught me at it, and Doogan tried to make me out an ord'nary overhead guerrilla." And, through a mouthful of hot beans, he cursed his captor roundly.

"But you saw he didn't appear against you?"

"Yes, and that's more'n I can get onto," he answered, puzzled by the stranger's quiet smile.

"Say, Durkin, you didn't think it was your good looks got you off, did you?" The younger man looked at him out of half-angry eyes, but the stranger only continued to chuckle in his throat.

"I fixed Doogan for you," he went on, easily. "You're the sort of man I wanted—I saw that, first thing; and a friend o' mine kind o' dropped in and saw Doogan!"

The younger man gazed at him in dreamy wonder, trying to grope through the veil of unreality that seemed falling about him. Then, he listened, with suddenly alert eyes, as the stranger, to make sure of his man, tapped with a knife on the edge of his plate. Durkin read the Morse easily—"Don't talk so loud"—and wagged his head childishly over the little message, under the keen eyes of the stranger.

"Where'd you work, before you went with the Postal Union?"

"Up in the woods," laughed the other, as he rambled. "I was a despatcher for the Grand Trunk at Komoko, where the tunnel trains cut off west for Chicago; and they work their men like dogs. Some way or other, I sent an Oddfellows' excursion head on into a gravel-train—saw it twenty minutes before they touched, and wired in my resign."

"But how'd you come to leave the Postal Union?"

A momentary slyness crept into his eyes, but he laughed weakly, and reached out for another drink; the older man shook his head, and held back the bottle.

"Oh, that's another dose of my luck! They black-listed me, damn 'em!"

The other held up a warning finger. "Not so loud! Go on."

"Of course, I went into the P. U. carrying a fly, so I got along all right. But I kind o' wanted to see a little life, and had telegrapher's paralysis coming on, and got sick of the grind. So, when some of the Aqueduct races were going through on a repeater next to me, to Reedy's pool-rooms, I just reached over and held up one side of the repeater. Then, say third horse won, I got over to the window, and took out my handkerchief three times. Then, a friend of mine 'phoned to our man, and when he'd had time to get his money up I sent the result through. But they got onto the dodge, and soaked me!" Then, he added, regretfully, "I'd have made a clear five hundred, if they'd given me another day's chance!"

"Well, I guess maybe you can even up with us." The younger man looked at the other narrowly, unsteady of eye, but still suspicious. Good grafts, he knew, had to be sought for long and arduously on this earth. "I guess I'd rather get something decent," he grumbled, pushing away his bean-plate, but still waiting, with some anxiety, for the other to explain.

"We all would, maybe; but a dead

sure thing's good enough, now and then."

"But where's all the money, in this cinch?" demanded Durkin.

"I can't tell you that here, but I'm no piker! Get in a cab with me, and then I'll lay everything out as we drive up to the house. But here, have a smoke!" he added, as he got up and hurried out to the door. Durkin had never dreamed that tobacco—even pure, Havana tobacco—could be so suave and mellow and fragrant.

"Now, you asked me about the money in this deal," the older man began, when he had slammed to the cab-door, and they went rumbling toward Fifth avenue. "Well, it's right here, see!" And, as he spoke, he drew a roll of bills from his pocket. Durkin could see that it was made up of many fifties and one-hundreds. He wondered, dazedly, how many thousands it held; it seemed, of a sudden, to put a new and sobering complexion on things.

"Now, if you want to swing in with us, here's what you get a week." The stranger pulled out four crisp fifty-dollar bills, and placed them in the other's bewildered fingers. "And, if our coup goes through, you get your ten-percent. rake off—and that ought to run you up from five to seven thousand dollars, easy!"

Durkin's fingers closed more tightly on his bills, and he drew in his breath, sharply.

"Who are you, anyway?" he asked, slowly.

"Me? Oh, I'm kind of an outsider operator, same as yourself!" He looked at Durkin, steadily, for a moment, and then, seeming satisfied, suddenly changed his tone. "Did you ever hear of Penfield, the big pool-room man? Well, I've been a plunger at Penfield's now for two months—long enough to see that he's as crooked as they make them. I'm going to give him a dose of his own medicine, and hit that gilded gambler for a slice of his genteel bank-roll—and a good, generous slice, too!"

"But what's—er—your special line

of business? How're you going to get at Penfield, I mean?"

"Ever hear of the Miami outfit?" asked the other.

"That cut in and hit the Montreal pool-rooms for eighty thousand?—well, I guess I have—a little!" He looked at the other man, in wonder. Then, it all seemed to dawn on him, in one illuminating, almost bewildering flash.

"You—you're not MacNutt?" he cried, reading his answer almost as he spoke. Half a year before, the Postal Union offices had been full of talk of the Miami Outfit and MacNutt, buzzing with meager news of the audacity and cool insolence of Miami's "lightning-slingers," who, when they saw they had worked their game to a finish, cut in with their, "We've got your dough, now you can go to—" as they made for cover and ultimate liberty ten minutes before their hillside cave was raided, and nothing more than a packing-case holding three dozen Brumley dry batteries, a bunch of "KK" and a couple of Crosby long-distance telephones were found.

Durkin looked at the other man once more, almost admiringly, indeterminedly tempted, swayed against his will, in some way, by the splendor of a vast and unknown hazard.

"You're pretty confidential," he said, slowly, looking the other up and down. "What's to stop me squealing on you and the whole gang?"

MacNutt smiled, gently, and stroked his scrawny beard, touched here and there with gray. "What good would all that do you?" he asked.

"You are a cool cuss!" ejaculated the other.

"Oh, I guess I know men; and I sized you up, first thing, in the courtroom. You're the make of man I want, and—well, if you don't come out of this quite a few thousand to the good, it's all your own fault!"

Durkin whistled softly, and looked out at the flashing carriages as they threaded their way up the crowded Avenue. "Well, I guess I'm game enough!" he said, hesitatingly, still trying to sweep from his brain the

teasing mental cobweb that it was nothing more than a vivid nightmare. "I guess I'm your man," he repeated, as they turned off the Avenue, and drew up in front of a house with a brown-stone front, much like other private houses in New York's upper Thirties. They jumped out, and went quickly up the broad, stone steps.

"So you're with us, all right?" asked MacNutt, as his finger played oddly on the electric button beside the door.

"Yes, I'm with you," assented Durkin, stoutly, "to the finish!"

It was a full minute before the door opened, and the unlooked-for wait in some way keyed the younger man's curiosity up to the snapping point. As the door swung back, he had the startled vision of a young woman, dressed in sober black, looking half-timidly out at them with her hand still on the knob. As he noticed the wealth of her waving, chestnut hair, and the poise of the head, and the quiet calmness of the eyes, that appeared almost a violet-blue in contrast to the soft pallor of her face, Durkin felt that they had made a mistake in the house number. But, seeing MacNutt step quickly inside, he himself awkwardly took off his hat, and, under the spell of her quiet, almost pensive, smile, he decided that she could be little more than a mere girl, until he noticed the womanly fullness of her breast and hips and what seemed a languid weariness about the eyes themselves. He also noted the sudden telepathic glance that passed between MacNutt and the woman, a questioning flash on her part, an answering flash on the other's. Then she turned to Durkin, with her quiet, carelessly winning smile, and held out her hand, and his heart thumped and pounded more drunkenly than it had with all MacNutt's brandy and seltzer. Then, he heard MacNutt speaking, quickly and evenly.

"This is Mr. Jim Durkin; Durkin, this is Miss Mame Candler. You two're going to have lots o' trouble together, so I guess you'd better get acquainted right here—might as well

make it Mame and Jim—you're going to see a mighty good deal of each other!"

"All right, Jim," said the woman, girlishly, in a mellow, English contralto voice; then, she laughed, and Durkin flushed hot and cold as he felt her shaking hands with him once more. Strangely sobered, he stumbled over rugs and polished floors after them, up two flights of stairs, listening, still dazed, to MacNutt's hurried questions and the woman's low answers, which sounded thin and far away to him.

A man named Mackenzie, Durkin gathered from their talk, had been probing about the subway for half a day, and had just strung a wire on which much seemed to depend. They stopped before a heavy, oak-paneled door, on which MacNutt played a six-stroked tattoo. A key turned, and the next moment a middle-aged man in the cap and blue suit of a Consolidated Gas Company inspector, thrust his head cautiously through the opening. The sweat was running down his oily, dirt-smeared face; a look of relief spread over his features at the sight of the others.

The room into which Durkin stepped had once been a sewing-room. In one corner still stood a sewing-machine, in the shadow, incongruously enough, of a large safe with combination lock. Next to this stood a stout work-table, on which was a box relay and a Bunnell soulder. Around the latter were clustered a galvanometer, a 1-2 duplex set, a condenser, and a Wheatstone bridge of the post-office pattern, while about the floor lay coils of copper wire, a pair of lineman's pliers, and a number of scattered tools. Durkin's trained eye saw that the condenser had been in use, to reduce the current from a tapped electric-light wire; while the next moment, his glance fell on a complete wire-tapping outfit, snugly packed away in an innocent-enough looking suit-case. Then, he turned to the two men and the woman, as they bent anxiously over the littered table, where Mackenzie was once more struggling with his instrument, talking quickly

and tensely as he tested and worked and listened.

"Great Scott, Mack, it's easy enough for you to talk, but it was fool's luck, pure fool's luck, I ever got this wire up! First, I had forty feet o' water-pipe, then eighty feet o' brick-wall, then over fifty feet o' cornice, and about twice as much eave-trough, hangin' on all the time by my eye-lashes, and dog-sick waitin' to be pinched with the goods on! Hold on there—what's this?"

The sounder had given out a tremulous little quaver; then a feeble click or two; then was silent once more. "Lost it again!" said Mackenzie, under his breath.

"Let me look over that relay a minute!" broke in Durkin. It was the type of box-relay usually used by linemen, with a Morse key attached to the base-board, and he ran his eye over it quickly. Then, with a deft movement or two he released the binding of the armature lever screws, and, the next moment, the instrument felt the pulse of life, and spoke out clearly and distinctly.

"Listen!" he cried, gleefully, holding up a finger. "That's Corcoran, the old slob! He's sending through the New Orleans returns!" And he chuckled as he listened with inclined ear. "That's Corcoran—same old slob as ever!"

The four silent figures leaned a little closer over the clicking instrument of insensate brass—leaned, intent and motionless, with quickened breathing, and strangely altering faces.

"We've got 'em at last!" said MacNutt, quietly, mopping his face and pacing the little room with feverish steps.

"Yes, we've got 'em!" echoed Mackenzie.

Durkin could feel the woman's breath playing on his neck, and he turned to her, and could see by her quick breath and dilated pupils that she, too, had been reading the wire. And again he wondered, as he looked at her, how she ever came to such a place. To Durkin—who had heard of women bookies and touts in his day—

she seemed so soft, so flowerlike, in her pale womanhood, that she still remained to him one of the mysteries of a mysterious day.

The woman saw the impetuous warmth in his eyes as he gazed up at her, and quickly looked away. "No goo-gooing there, you folks!" broke in MacNutt, brusquely. Then, he turned quickly to the other man. "Now, Mack, we've got to get a move on! Get some of that grime off, and your clothes on—quick!" He turned back to the other two at the operating-table.

"I've certainly got a couple o' good-lookers in you two, all right, all right!" he said, Durkin thought, half-mockingly. "But I want you to get groomed up, Durkin—rigged out complete—before trouble begins, for you're going to move among some kind o' swell people. You two've got to put on a lot of face, to carry this thing through. Remember, I want you to do the swell restaurants, and drive round a good deal, and haunt the Avenue a bit, and drop in at Penfield's lower house whenever you get word from me. You'd better do the theatres now and then, too—I want you to be seen, remember—but always *together!* It may be kind o' hard, not bein' able to pick your friend, Durkin; but Mame knows the ropes, and she'll explain things as you go along."

He turned back, once more, from the doorway.

"Now, remember, don't answer that 'phone unless Mack or me gives the three-four ring! If she rings all night don't answer; and 'Battery Park,' mind, means trouble. When you're tipped off with that get the stuff in the safe, if you can, before you break away. That's all, I guess, for now!" And he joined the man called Mack in the hall, and together they hurried down-stairs, and let themselves out, leaving Durkin and his quiet-eyed colleague alone.

He sat and looked at her, dazed, bewildered, still teased by the veil of unreality which seemed to sway between him and the world about him. It seemed to him as though he were watch-

ing a hurrying, shifting drama from a distance—watching it as he used to watch the Broadway performances from his cramped little gallery seat.

"Am I awake?" he asked, weakly. Then, he laughed recklessly, and turned to her once more, abstractedly rubbing his stubbled chin, and remembering, to his sudden shame, that he had gone unshaved for half a week.

"Yes, it's all very real!" laughed the woman herself, now unrestrainedly; and, for the first time, he noticed her white, regular teeth, as she hurried about, straightening up the belittered room.

During his narrow and busy life Durkin had known few women; never before had he known a woman like this one, with whom destiny had so strangely ordained he should talk and drive, work and plot. He looked once more at her thick, tumbled chestnut hair, at the soft pallor of her oval cheek, and the well-gowned figure, as she stooped over a condenser—wondering within himself how it would all end, and what was the meaning of it.

"Well, this certainly does beat me!" he said, at last, slowly, yet contentedly enough.

The young woman looked at him; and he caught a second glimpse of her wistfully pensive smile, while his heart thumped, in spite of himself. He reached out a hesitating hand, as though to touch her.

"What is it?" she asked, in her mellow English contralto.

"I don't exactly know," he answered, with his hand before his eyes. "I wish you'd tell me!"

She came and sat down in a chair before him, pushing back her tumbled hair with one hand, seeming to be measuring him with her intent gaze. She appeared in some way satisfied with him; it seemed almost as if she had taken his face between her two hands, and read it, feature by feature.

"I hardly know where to begin," she hesitated. "I mean, I don't know how much they've explained to you already. Indeed, there's a great deal I don't understand myself. But, of

course, you know we have tapped Penfield's private wire. And, of course, you know why. He gets all the race returns at the club-house, and then sends them on by private 'phone to his other two pool-rooms. He has to do it that way, now that New York is not so open."

Durkin knew all this, but he waited, for the sake of hearing her voice, and watching the play of her features.

"Every track report, you know, comes into New York by way of the race department of the Postal Union, on lower Broadway. There, messenger-boys hurry about with the reports to the different wire-operators, who wire the returns to the company's different subscribers. Penfield, of course, is really one of them, though it's not generally known."

"But what have you and I to do with all this?" he broke in.

"Quite enough! You see, there's a delay of nearly fifteen minutes, naturally, in getting a result to the pool-rooms. That gives us our chance; so, we hold up the message here, 'phone it at once over to MacNutt's rooms, three doors from Penfield's, and, when he has had time to drop in and place his money, we send through our intercepted message."

"Then Penfield has no idea who or what MacNutt is?"

"He knows him only as a real-estate agent with a passion for plunging, a great deal of money, and—and—" The girl shrugged a rounded shoulder, and did not finish.

"And you—?" Durkin hesitated, in turn.

"Both you and I shall have to drop in, on certain days, and do what we can at Penfield's lower house, while Mackenzie is doing the Madison-avenue place. We've been going there, on and off, for weeks now, getting ready for—for this!"

"Then MacNutt's been working on this scheme for a long time?"

"Yes; this house has been rented by the month, furnished, simply because it stood in about the right place. We've even dropped a few hundred

dollars, altogether, in Penfield's different places. But, in the end, the three of us are to hit Penfield together, on a ragged field, when there's a chance for heavy odds. But, of course, we can do it only once!"

"And then what?" asked Durkin. Again the girl shrugged a shoulder.

"Penfield's patrons are all wealthy men," she went on. "A book of a hundred thousand is common enough; sometimes it goes up to two or three hundred thousand. So, you see, it all depends on our odds. MacNutt himself hopes to make at least a hundred thousand; but then he has worked and brooded over it all so long, I don't think he sees things clearly, now!"

"He seems sharp enough to leave you and me here, though, to take all the risk in a raid," protested Durkin.

"Yes," she assented, wearily, "we take the risk; he supplies the money."

"How did *you* ever get mixed up with—with—in this sort of thing?" Durkin demanded, turning to her, suddenly. The eyes of the two met, for a moment, and the girl at last looked away.

"How did *you*?" she asked, quietly enough. She was strangely unlike any woman "bookie" he had ever before seen.

"Oh, me! I'm different!" he cried. For some subtle reason she went pale, and then flushed hot again.

"You're—you're not MacNutt's wife?" he asked her, almost hopelessly.

She moved her head from side to side, slowly, in dissent, and got up and went to the window, where she gazed out over the house-tops at the paling afternoon. "No, I'm not his wife," she said, in her quiet contralto.

"Then why won't you tell me how you got mixed up in this sort of thing?"

"It's all so silly and commonplace," she said, without turning to look at him.

"Yes?" he said, and waited.

"It began two years ago, when I

answered an advertisement from London. I came to be a governess in a New York family. At the end of my first week here, my mistress suspected me unjustly of—I can't explain it all to you here; but she said I was too good-looking to be a governess, and discharged me without even a reference. I was penniless in two weeks, and, when I was almost starving, I was glad enough to become the secretary of an investment company, with an office in Wall street. The police raided the office—it turned out to be nothing but a swindling scheme; and then—oh, I don't know—I just drifted from one thing to another until I was the English heiress in a matrimonial bureau, and the stenographer in a turf bureau; and then, at last, I met MacNutt!"

"And then what?" Durkin's careless shoulders were very upright.

"Oh, first it was a women's get-rich-quick concern in Chicago; then, a turf-investment office in St. Louis; then, a matrimonial bureau of our own, until the police put a stop to it because of the post-office people; then, it was chasing the circuit for a season; and, finally, this wire-tapping plan!" She looked at him, weary-eyed, smilingly hopeless.

"I—I send home money, regularly," she went on, more quietly. "They think I'm a governess here; and I daren't let them know. So, you see, I've been nothing but cowardly—and—and wicked, from the first!"

"And is that all?" demanded Durkin.

"Yes," she answered, wearily, "I think that's all."

"But you're too—too good for all this!" he cried, impetuously. "Why don't you break away from it?"

"I'm going to, some day! I've always waited, though, and everything has dragged on and on and on, and I've been half-afraid of MacNutt—you know, he never forgives a person—and half-afraid of myself. But some day——"

"I know what it's like!" cried Durkin, drawn toward her, strangely

nearer to her in some intangible way. She read the sudden look on his face, and blushed under it, almost girlishly, once more.

"I want to rest, and be quiet, and live decently, away from the world, somewhere," she said, dreamily, as though speaking only to herself.

"So do I!" said the man at her side, gazing with her out at the gathering twilight of the city, and lapsing into silence once more.

More than once, during the feverish kaleidoscopic days that followed, Durkin found himself drawing aside to ask if, after all, he were not living some restless dream in which all things hung tenuous and insubstantial. The fine linen and luxury of life were so new to him that in itself it half-intoxicated; yet, outside the mere ventral pleasures of existence, with its good dinners in quiet cafés of gold and glass and muffling carpets, its visits to rustling, dimly-lighted theatres, its drives about the open city, its ever-mingled odors of Havana and cut-flowers—there was the keener and more penetrating happiness of listening to the soft, English voice of a bewilderingly beautiful woman. Durkin found work to be done, it is true—rigorous and exacting work, when the appointed days for holding up Penfield's despatches came around. But the danger of it all, for some reason, never entered his mind, as he sat over his instrument, reading off the horses to the woman at his side, who, in turn, repeated them over the 'phones, in cipher, to MacNutt and Mackenzie; and then, when the time-alloance had elapsed, cutting in once more and sending on the intercepted despatches, even imitating to a nicety the slipshod, erratic volubility of Corcoran's "blind send."

Only once did a disturbing incident tend to ruffle the quiet waters of Durkin's strange contentment. It was one afternoon when Mackenzie had been sent in to make a report, and had noticed certain things to which he did not take kindly, Durkin thought.

"I'm not saying anything," he blurted out, when they were alone, "but don't let that woman make a fool of you!"

"You shut up about that woman!" retorted Durkin, hotly.

"You damned lobster, you!" the other cried, with some wordless disgust on his face. "Don't you know that woman's been——?"

But here the entrance of the girl herself put a stop to his speech. Yet, troubled in spirit as that currish insinuation left him, Durkin breathed no word to the girl herself of what had taken place, imperiously as she demanded to know what Mackenzie had been saying.

On the following day, as MacNutt had arranged, the two paid their first visit to Penfield's lower house, from which Durkin carried away confused memories of a square-jawed doorkeeper—who passed him, readily enough, at a word from the girl; of well-dressed men and over-dressed women crowded about a smoky, gas-lit room, one side of which was taken up with a black-board on which attendants were feverishly chalking down entries, jockeys, weights and odds, while on the other side of the room opened the receiving- and paying-tellers' little windows, through which now and then he saw hurrying clerks; of bettors excitedly filling in slips which disappeared with their money through the mysterious pigeon-hole in the wall; of the excited comments as the announcer called the facts of the races, crying dramatically when the horses were at the post, when they were off, when one horse led, and when another; when the winner passed under the wire; of the long, wearing wait while the jockeys were weighing in, and of the posting of the official returns, while the lucky ones gathered jubilantly at the window for their money, and the unlucky dropped forlornly away, or lingered for still another plunge.

Durkin found it hard, during each of these brief visits, to get used to the new order of things. Such light-

fingered handling of what, to his eyes, seemed fortunes, unstrung and bewildered him; the loss of even a hundred dollars on a horse in some way depressed him for the day. Mame picked her winners, however, with studious and deliberate skill, and, though they bet freely, it was not often that their losses, in the end, were heavy.

It was one night after a lucky plunge on a 20-to-1 horse had brought him in an unexpected fortune of eighteen hundred dollars that Durkin, driving up Fifth avenue through the waning afternoon of the early Winter with Mame at his side, allowed his thoughts to wander back to his thin and empty existence as a Postal Union operator. As he gazed out on the carriages and the women and the lights, and felt the warmth of the girl at his side, he wondered how he had ever endured that old, colorless life.

With a sudden, impetuous motion he caught up her hand, where it lay idly in her lap, and held it close. She tried to draw it away, but could not.

"Everything seems so different, Mame, since I've known you!" he said, huskily.

"It's different with me, too!" she all but whispered, looking away. Her face, in the waning light, against the gloom of the green-lined hansom, looked pale, almost flowerlike.

"Mame!" he cried, softly, in a voice that started her breathing quickly, "Mame, won't you—won't you marry me?"

She looked at him out of what seemed frightened eyes, with a strange, half-startled light on her pale face.

"I love you, Mame, more than I can tell!" he went on, impetuously. "You could walk over me, and I'd be happy!"

"Oh, you don't know me, you don't know me!" she cried. "You don't know what I've been!" And some agony of mind seemed to wrench her whole body.

"I don't care what you've been—I know what you *are*! You're the girl I'd give my life for! Good Lord, look

at me; ain't I bad enough, myself? I love you, Mame; isn't that enough?"

She let him catch her up to his shoulder and hold her there, with her wet cheek against his; she even said nothing when he bent and kissed her on the mouth, though her very lips grew colorless.

"I do love you!" she sighed, weakly. "I do love you! I do!" and she clung to him, childishly, shaken with a sob or two, happy, yet vaguely troubled.

"Then why can't we get away from here, somewhere, and be happy?"

"There's MacNutt!" she cried, remembering, opening her drooping eyes to grim life again. "He'd—he'd—" She did not finish.

"What's he to us?" Durkin demanded. "I only wish, by heavens, I had my hands on a few of his thousands!"

The girl looked up, quickly, with the flash of some new thought shadowed on her white face.

"Why *shouldn't* we?" she cried, half bitterly. "We've gone through enough for him!"

"Yes," hesitated Durkin, "why shouldn't we?"

"Then we could go away," she was saying, dreamily, "away to England, even! I wonder if you would like England? I wonder if you would?"

"I'd like any place, where you were!"

"He's always been a welcher with the people he uses. He'll be a welcher with us!"

She turned to Durkin with a sudden determination. "Would you risk it, with me?"

"I'd risk anything for you!" he said, taking her hand once more.

"We've a right to our happiness," she argued, passionately. "We've our life—all our life, almost—before us! And I've loved you, Jim," she confessed, toying with a button on his sleeve, "from that first day MacNutt brought you up!"

For all the calm precision with which Mabel Candler had planned out a line of prompt action with Durkin, she was shaking and nervous and unstrung as

she leaned over the sounder, breathlessly waiting for the rest of the day's returns to come through on Penfield's wire.

Durkin, with two thousand dollars of his own and an additional eight hundred from her, had already plunged his limit at Penfield's lower house, on the strength of her tip over the 'phone. There was still to be one final hazard, with all he held; and at five o'clock they were to meet at Hartley's restaurant, and from there escape to a new world of freedom and contentment. But the fear of MacNutt still hung over her, as she waited—fear for certain other things besides their secret revolt on the very eve of their chief's gigantic coup. For she knew what MacNutt could be when he was crossed. So, she leaned and waited and listened with parted lips, wishing it was all over with, torn by a thousand fears.

Then, to her sudden terror, Mackenzie called her up sharply.

"Is that you, Mame?" he cried, excitedly.

"Yes; what is it, Mack?" she answered, calmly enough, but with quaking knees.

"Doogan's men are watching me here—they've got onto something or other. Cut this wire loose from outside, and get your 'phone out of sight. And, for heaven's sake, don't cut in on Penfield's wire. I've just tipped off MacNutt—he's off his dip, about it all. Look out for yourself, old girl!" he added, in a different tone of voice.

She rang off, and vowed passionately within herself that she would look out for herself. Catching up a pair of pliers, she cut the telephone wire from the open window, leaving two hundred feet of it to dangle over the little back house-courts. Then, she ran to the door and locked and bolted it, listening all the while for the wire to speak out to her.

A minute later, MacNutt himself rang up, and asked for Durkin.

"What're you doing there?" he demanded, with a startled oath, as he heard her voice. She tried to stammer out an excuse. There was a mo-

ment's pause; the man all but hissed one ugly word over the wire to the listening woman. Mackenzie had been hinting to him of certain things; now, he knew.

He did not wait even to replace his receiver. While she still stood there, white and dazed, he was in a hansom, rattling and swaying nearer her, block by block. He let himself in with his own pass-key, and raced up the long stair, his face drawn, and a dull, claret tinge. He found the door closed and bolted; he could hear nothing from within but the muffled clicking of the sounder as it ticked out the later New Orleans returns. No answer came to his knocking. He seized an old-fashioned walnut arm-chair from the next room, and forced it with all his weight against the oak panels. They splintered and broke, and, under the second blow, fell in, leaving only the heavier cross-pieces intact.

Quite motionless, waiting over the sounder, bent the woman, as though she had neither seen nor heard. "White Legs — Yukon Girl — Lord Selwyn," those alone were the words which the clicking brass seemed to brand on her very brain. In three seconds, she stood before the telephone, at the other end of which she knew Durkin to be waiting. But she saw the flash of something in the hand of the man who leaned through the broken panel, and paused, motionless, with a little, inarticulate cry.

"Touch that 'phone, you welcher, and I'll plug you!" the man was screaming at her. His face was now bluish purple, and horrible to look at.

"I've got to do it, Mack!" she pleaded, raising one hand to her face.

He called her many foul names, and deliberately trained his pistol on her breast.

"Mack, you wouldn't shoot *me*, after —after everything? Oh, Mack, I've got to send this through! I've got to!" she wailed.

"Stop!" he gasped; and she knew there was no hope.

"You wouldn't shoot me, Mack?" she whined again, with the cunning of

the cornered animal; for, even as she spoke, the hand that hovered about her face shot out and caught up the receiver. Her other hand flashed to the bell-lever, and the sharp tinkle of the bell rang through the room. Her eyes were on MacNutt; she saw the finger compress on the trigger, even as her hand first went up.

"Jim!" she called, sharply, with an agony of despair in that one quick word. She repeated the call, but a reverberation that shook shreds of plaster from the ceiling drowned her voice. The receiver fell, and swung at full length. The smoke lifted slowly, curling softly toward the open window.

MacNutt gazed, stupefied, at the huddled figure on the floor. How long he looked he scarcely knew, but he was startled from his stupor by the sound of blows on the street-door. Flinging his revolver into the room, he stumbled down the heavily carpeted stairs, slunk out a back door, and, sprawling over the court-fence, fell into a yard strewn with empty boxes. Seeing a near-by door, he opened it, and found himself in a noisy auction-room filled with bidders. Pushing hurriedly through them, he stepped out into the street, unnoticed.

When the wounded woman had made sure that she was alone—she had been afraid to move where she lay, fearing a second shot—with a little groan or two she tried to rise to her knees. But this, she found, was beyond her strength. The left sleeve of her waist, she also saw, was wet and sodden with blood. Already, she could hear footsteps below, and again and again she told herself that she must be ready when Durkin came, that he, at least, must not be trapped. She, as a mere pool-room stenographer, had little to fear from the law. But as she tried, with her teeth and her free arm, to tear a strip from her white underskirt, the movement, for all her tight-lipped determination, was too much for her. She had a faint memory of hearing footsteps swarming about her, and then of ebbing and pulsing down

through endless depths of what seemed to her eider-downed emptiness.

When she came to, one of Doogan's men was leaning over her, with a pocket-flask of brandy in his hand. She looked at him, bewildered, and from him to the other four men who stood about her; and then it all came back to her.

She closed her eyes again, vaguely wondering if some teasing, indeterminate mishap, which she could not quite remember, had yet come about. At first, she could not grasp it, as she lay there moaning with pain; and then it, too, came to her, in a flash. It was Durkin. He was coming back; and they were waiting there, waiting to trap him. Again, she told herself that she must keep her head, and be cool. She looked at the five men in the room; three of them, she knew, were plain-clothes men from the Central Office, the other two were Doogan's agents. If Durkin came while they were still there—and now he *could* not be long!—they would let him in, and say nothing, and there they would have him, like a rat in a trap.

She grew hysterical, and cried out to them that she was dying, yet, waiting all the time for the sound of Durkin's step, trying to think how she might save him. At last, to her sudden joy, she remembered that he was to bring from her rooms with him her own hand-bag, filled with a few things which she had gathered up to take away with her. He would surely carry that bag in with him when he came; that was her salvation.

She fell to shrieking again that she was dying, demanding shrilly why her doctor had not come. Through her cries, her alert ears heard the sound of voices at the street-door. It was Durkin, at last; he had spoken a word or two with the two plain-clothes men, who, she knew, would readily enough let him pass.

"Doctor!" she screamed, as she heard his steps on the stair. "Doctor! I'm dying, doctor! Are you never coming?"

She wondered, in her agony, if he

would be fool enough not to understand. *Would* he be fool enough?

Doogan's agents and the three plain-clothes men gathered about her silently, as they saw the intruder hurry in and drop on his knee beside the woman. "Is it you, doctor?" she wailed, shaking with an on-coming chill.

Durkin, in his dilemma, did not dare to look away from her face. He was blindly trying to grope his way toward what it all meant. The others stood above him, listening, waiting for the least word.

He bent lower, and tried to read the dumb agony in the woman's face. Then, out of the chaos and the disorder of the chattering of her teeth seemed to come a hint, a whisper. She was sounding the double "I" of the operator—she was trying to tell him something. He bent still closer, and fumbled artfully with the sleeve, wet and sodden with her warm blood.

He read her signal, as she lay there with chattering teeth: "All up! Get away, quick! These are police! Meet you in London—two months—Hotel Cecil—hurry!"

He looked up at the men above him, with a sudden towering, drunken mad-

ness of relief, a madness which they took for sudden rage.

"You fools, you," he called at them, "you fools, this woman's dying! Here, you, quick—compress this artery with your thumb—hard, so! You, you—oh, I don't care *who* you are—telephone for my instruments—Dr. Hodgson, No. 29 West Thirtieth!"—luckily, he remembered Mame's throat doctor—"and get me a sheet off one of the beds, quick!"

He tossed his hat into the hall, and jerked off his cuffs, almost believing in it himself.

"Water—where'll I get a water-tap?" he asked, feverishly, running to the door. Outside the room, he suddenly caught up his hat. Then, he turned and bolted noiselessly up a pair of back stairs, and gained the roof. There he crept, cat-like, across half-a-dozen houses, slipped down a fire escape, and gave a startled Irish housemaid a five-dollar bill to let him pass through her mistress's apartment.

As he turned hurriedly into Madison avenue, toward the Grand Central station, he heard the clang of a bell, and saw an ambulance clatter down the street. And then he repeated something in his mind, to make sure of it: "London—two months—Hotel Cecil."



A SOUTHERN BALCONY

IN the soft glow and glamour of the night
 I heard the sound of music down the street—
 A girl's voice singing some old ballad sweet,
 A song of love and all of love's delight.
 Above me hung the moon's great blossom bright,
 And swarms of stars like bees came forth to greet
 This bloom of wonder in its blue retreat—
 This world-flower with a bosom lily white.

Within the plaza, drowsily the purl
 Of fountains fell upon the fragrant air,
 And I, weary of the long, hot day,
 Slumbered and dreamed; and still that singing girl
 Sang in her balcony—and I was there
 With you, sweetheart, a thousand miles away!

FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN.

THE MORAL BALLAD OF GAMALIEL LADD AND HIS GIDDY BRIDE

By Guy Wetmore Carryl

GAMALIEL LADD might have gone to the bad (as most of his family did),
Except for one bias, for, earnestly try as he would, he could never get
rid

Of a perfectly puerile affection for rural and pleasingly pastoral life,
Where you go round in braces to all kinds of places, and eat lima beans with a
knife.

He really felt pity for men in the city, bound down unto rigid routines,
And fated to talk and to eat and to walk as if they'd been merely machines;
Such life was so stale to this singular male that he always was longing to have
a new,

"Which is not to be found," he asserted, "around that tiresome highway, Fifth
avenue."

When they asked him to dine, when they offered him wine, he said to the men
at his club:

"I wouldn't touch sole with a thirty-foot pole, and *my* tippie is raspberry shrub.
For boys and for bounders are Frenchified flounders, and truffles and terrapin,
too—

I'd rather eat cat-fish than second rate flat-fish, and leather belongs in a shoe."
At each *table d'hôte* meal he pined for the oatmeal, the doughnuts and blueberry
tart,

Which they gave him to eat in the rural retreat which was dear to his innocent
heart;

Till he packed up his grip, gave his comrades the slip, and the N. Y., N. H.
and H. on

Escaped to the quiet and common-sense diet of North Rusticalbury, Conn.

The more he commuted, the more deeply rooted his love of the rural became;
He wore the blue jeans of those pastoral scenes with never a symptom of shame;
He followed the plough, and went after the cow, and learned to cut grass with
a scythe,

And his highly oracular country vernacular made his acquaintances writhe.

He plucked up some that the moment had come when romance had entered his
life,

That the girl wasn't swell, but meant awfully well, and would make him an
excellent wife.

He plucked up the nerve to boldly observe that he *liked* the name, Emily Pearl;
And he wed in October, while helplessly sober, a North Rusticalbury girl.

The couple came down for a fortnight in town, and, when with his wonted
placidity

The hotels he called off, she picked out the Waldorf, and that's what *he* got for
stupidity.

"But, tell me, my love, when you've had enough of metropolitan gaiety," said he.

She gave a bright smile, and she answered him: "I'll be certain to stop when I'm ready."

She determined each day, in a casual way, to dally around and to see things, And, now and again, to invite a few men to drop in and rattle the tea-things. It was proved in a jiffy to hubby that, if he of giddy New York wasn't fond, His beautiful wife took a shine to the life like a duck to a neighboring pond!

Then the cronies of Ladd went totally mad over Emily Pearl, and would seize 'Most any evasion which gave them occasion to come to her capital teas.

They dropped in in bunches for dinners and lunches, they sat around chatting for hours,

They told her their woes and the price of their clothes, and squandered their money on flowers.

Her particular kind is quite easy to find; you will know it at once, I suppose,

When I add that her game was a fellow's first name, and her fan on the floor when she rose.

She said with a sigh that her youth had gone by, she hinted at sorrows so sadly That her swains in a squad lay down on the sod, and let her walk over them gladly.

Each day a new bonnet, with humming-birds on it, she showed to the stupefied Ladd;

She'd buy a fresh toilette, and wear it, and spoil it, and smile when she should have been sad;

She rented a brougham, and a trim little groom, and nightly she went to the opera;

And, though a beginner, she loved to take dinner at Sherry's (or somewhere improper!).

She was no light-weight, she had to have whitebait, and pâté, and chicken ragôût;

She thought, on the whole, she rather liked sole, and truffles and terrapin, too.

She was no beer-steiner, she ordered Niersteiner, burgundy, Pommery sec,

And sipped Russian kümmel, while Ladd murmured "Himmel!" when Anatole brought him the check.

Gamaliel Ladd a sufficiency had of this while the game was yet young;

He turned rather pale, and gnawed at his nail, and he moistened his lip with his tongue;

Then he said to his wife, "I must tell you, my life, this conviction my cranium fills:

There are too many Larries, and Johnnies, and Harries, and oh, there are too many Bills!

It's time it should cease; so, pack your valise, and our traveling togs we will don, And hop on a train, and return once again to North Rusticalbury, Conn."

It would fill me with pain did I have to explain what the giddy young creature replied;

'Twas the swift line of talk that is heard in New York when a man tries to bully his bride.

THE MORAL is somewhat immoral: She's still giving capital teas;

The club-world is winking a cynical eye; Ladd's minding his q's and his p's.

Take the capital T, and the cynical I, and the curious P as well,

And you won't make a fool of yourself if at school you learned the short word that they spell!

AN INVITATION TO LUNCHEON

By Margaret Johnson

“A PERFECT match, my dear —you couldn't do better. And you are certainly fortunate to find a blue that will go with that crêpe; blues are so difficult, I think. But Harrison would have it, if any one. Lovely store, isn't it? Why, do you realize that it is nearly one o'clock? Shopping does make the time fly so! I had no idea— Now, you must come and have some luncheon with me! Yes, positively—don't say a word—it will be the greatest pleasure! Then, we can *talk*. It is simply impossible to say a word in these stores; besides, I'm hungry, aren't you? Yes, and you're not in a hurry? That will be perfectly lovely! How delightful that I met you!

“Where shall we go? Oh, anywhere you like. I *would* say Scarey's or the Calledoff—would that suit you—only—one does like, you know—I haven't got on— You haven't, either? Well, that's all right, then! And I guess we shall enjoy it just as much if we aren't *too* stylish! What do you say to Furswell's? Rather out of our way, isn't it? And then, I don't know that I care especially—you do get tired of a place if you go very often, don't you think? There's Huyllard's—don't you like Huyllard's? Oh, is it? How perfectly lovely! If a person *has* a favorite place, I always think it's so nice; and it doesn't make a bit of difference to me.

“Walk, sha'n't we? Yes, so would I. Maud—my cousin, Maud Morris, you know—had the funniest experience at Huyllard's the other day. She was lunching there with a friend, and they had just ordered their chocolate—odd,

isn't it, how you always feel as if you must have chocolate at Huyllard's? And, after all, I don't know that I think their chocolate *is*—there's so much in a name, you know. It's quite absurd, sometimes; but, after a place once gets a reputation—

“Did you ever try Matson's? Oh, yes, the dearest little place! Not so swell, you know, but real cozy and pleasant, and ridiculously reasonable! And the things are every bit as good, I think! I don't see any sense in paying fancy prices just for the sake of it, do you? Some people are so—well, *let's*, if you say so. It will be new to you, anyway, and I think a new place is always fun, don't you?

“Oh, no; not far—only two or three blocks. Aren't you glad they're going to wear so much lace this season? Expensive, of course, but then, I always did love those soft, droopy things. Yes, aren't they? I should like to get Reggie a suit like that one in the window; isn't it dear! Oh, yes, I cut his hair that way last Spring. It's a perfectly sweet way for little boys, I think. My husband laughs at me because I say I don't see anything nice about the Russians except the way they cut their little boys' hair. At least, I suppose they cut it so, don't you? or else, why should we—?

“Why, do you know we've passed Matson's? We *must* have—we were talking so fast, and I never noticed. I'm not sure—oh, well, it's no use going back now. It's getting so late, and you might not have liked it, anyway. We might run in to the Sienna Cakery, now that we have come down so far. That's always good; and their coffee,

you know! I tell my husband that really, after all, a cup of coffee and a roll is all I want at noon, when I am out shopping. If you have a late breakfast and then a hearty meal in the middle of the day, you don't have a chance to get hungry for dinner. I often tell him I don't see how he can—Well, shall we? All right; *I'd* like it just as well, and it takes so much less time!

"Oh, if you don't mind, I do want to run in and ask about a filter at John-awaker's. Do you use a stone filter? Yes, it won't take a minute. Oh, have you an errand, too? How lovely! We might as well, so long as we are right here—and then we can come back and enjoy our luncheon with a clear conscience. Yes, I know; some people always do. Maud does—she won't have a drop on her table that isn't boiled. But my husband says he doesn't care about boiled germs; he'd rather take his raw, so long as he's got to have them, anyhow. Absurd, isn't it? He is so ridiculous, sometimes!

"Yes, they have hot chocolate at the soda-fountain. Quite an idea, isn't

it! And they give you two little crackers with it in a saucer—so cute! Maud took some the other day, and she said it was just as good as you'd care to have. I laughed at her, but I thought, after all, perhaps I'd try it some day. No, you don't mean it! Would you, *really*? It seems so funny, doesn't it? But *I* don't care, and it's getting so late, too! I promised to be home early. Oh, *did* you? Well, if you say so, perhaps we may as well.

"Yes, you buy your checks at the desk, just like soda-water. Oh, you must let me! Seriously, I *insist*! Why—why, did you ever—isn't it too absurd! I haven't anything but a ten-dollar bill! Wait a minute. No, I really haven't! How perfectly provoking! What? Have you, truly? Well, if you don't mind—it does seem too bad to change a bill just for that! If you *will*—thank you, ever so much; and don't forget to remind me the very first time I see you again!

"Right over there at the counter. Yes, isn't it? We must lunch together again some day. Good-bye! My love to the children. So *glad* I met you! Good-bye!"



CHOPIN'S ANDANTE IN F MINOR

BUT, if I follow through a world of snow
The trailing skirts of storm by land and sea,
All the long path appointed me to go,
Shall I not come to thee?

But, if I dare to toil by night and day,
The thirst and thorns of many a desert place,
The ambushed brake of foes beside my way,
Shall I not find thy face?

But, if I break the bonds of shroud and clod,
When the last trump shall wake the souls of men,
Claiming thy kiss beyond the gates of God—
Wilt thou not love me, then?

MABEL EARLE.

THE NEXT TABLE

By Theodosia Garrison

SHE wondered why the fact of her deciding to marry the man had made him so suddenly obnoxious. Yesterday, no doubt, his figure had been as rotund, his eyes as small and deeply placed, his head as bald, and his jewels as obtrusive as they showed now when the city lights flashed by their hansom.

There was a jewel of his on her own finger. She pressed it rather sharply into her flesh as she listened. It helped her to keep her mind on the subject at hand—a subject which any man might reasonably assume to be of paramount importance to his fiancée. He was speaking of himself in the commending tone with which one patronizes and approves a stranger. She caught, listlessly, at the end of his story.

"And, when I make up my mind to do a thing, I take care not to be disappointed. I spent the last penny I had in the world there, and for a mighty poor dinner, too. You wouldn't think it was a place to be fond of, under the circumstances, eh? Well, I ain't, but that night, when I put my last dime down for the waiter, I said to myself, 'Roden, you go out of this place broke, but the next time you come, you'll have your pile, and you can buy the whole damned thing, from the bar to the cook, if you feel like it!' Well, it's a queer thing, perhaps, but I kept the thought in the back of my head, and when the shekels began to roll in, I brought it out again. That's why we're going here to-night. You mustn't kick if it isn't up to Sherry's."

"But you might have come before,"

she said. "Surely, your—your money—*isn't* a thing of to-day."

He laughed, unctuously, laying his heavy hand on her own.

"No, but you are. I waited to go the whole figure, and I guess I have. You're the top mark; you represent what the whole thing means—I waited for you."

"It's rather far down-town," she said. The remark, she felt, was wholly inappropriate, but it was, at least, speech, and it postponed the caress which she felt was imminent.

"We're here now," he said. "It's well after eight. We'll have the place to ourselves, I imagine."

She waited, while he overpaid the cabby ostentatiously, and they went up the long steps.

The restaurant, like many others in the neighborhood, had been made by converting a one-time private house to its needs. There was nothing in the sight of the stout and beaming cashier at the high desk in the narrow hall that struck her as familiar, but at the threshold of the dining-room she stopped, with a sudden, choked exclamation.

That wall-paper with its ridiculous frieze of blue, and titanic roses—the stuffed owl on the mantel—the grotesque oil-painting over the very table to which the solitary waiter was leading them! She recognized them with a thoroughness that sent the color from her cheeks.

She laid an impulsive hand on Roden's arm. "Oh, not *this* place, surely!" she said.

The man laughed. "Pretty cheap, eh?" he said. "But you can stand it

for once. We'll make up for it to-morrow night."

The waiter pulled the chairs from the table beneath the absurd painting, and smiled at them, benevolently.

The girl's fingers tightened on Roden's arm. "Take the next table," she insisted.

She seated herself with her back to the one the waiter had designated before she smiled her explanation at Roden.

"That wall-paper would put my eyes out if I stared at it too long. I would rather face the window, if you don't mind. I don't want to go about with blue roses on my nerves for the rest of my life."

She kept the smile on her lips as Roden consulted the soiled menu and impressed the waiter with the munificence of his order. Roden answered the smile, approvingly.

"I guess the waiter had the shock of his life just now," he said. "The last time I was here, I had liver and bacon, and washed it down with water. Well"—he threw a glance about at the empty room—"it is later than I thought. We've got the place to ourselves, at any rate. It's about the first time I've had you alone since—" He nodded significantly at the ring on her finger.

"Yes," she said, "we have it quite to ourselves." But, as she spoke, the consciousness of the two people at the table behind her was so real that she almost wondered why Roden, facing them, seemed blind to their existence.

She had seen them the moment she hesitated at the threshold. Had they been always sitting there, she thought, since that May night last year, always looking at each other with the same eyes, with hands that crept always a little nearer to one another across the cloth? She could hear their voices plainly—the man's low voice, with its fascinating Southern drawl; the girl's happy, young laugh, with its wonderful note of tenderness. Had she really laughed like that once? she wondered. It seemed strange now that any woman could.

"No," the man was saying, "I am

quite right about your eyes; and, if I have put them in a story, it is no more than you deserve for daring to have them. Think of all the stories I am going to find there—always!"

The waiter filled the glass at her elbow. She realized that Roden was addressing her. He lifted his glass, the stones on his stout fingers reflected in its contents.

"Here's to luck," he said; "something we both can appreciate, eh? I should say we were both pretty successful people. It isn't every day that a man can make his pile, or a woman marry it. It isn't every woman I'd want to have spend it for me, either. The Lord knows it wouldn't be hard to find plenty to help me, but I'm a bit particular. I wanted a thoroughbred—one that could act as though she was used to it. Why, the first time I set eyes on you—"

"You'll be the prettiest pauper in the world, and I'll be the happiest," said the low voice behind her, "and, if you ever get tired of going up four flights of stairs, I'll carry you. Oh, sweetheart, to think it will be our home—ours!—waiting for us at the top of them; and, if I ever have to leave you for an hour—if I *have* to—think of my coming back to find you there! Just you and me, with the doors closed and the rest of the world shut out."

"Why, the first time I set eyes on you," Roden repeated, "I said to myself, 'There's the one for me—there's the sort of a woman to do a man credit, at home or abroad.' And, speaking of that, I suppose you'll want to travel—all women do. We'll take a little run across the pond this Summer, if you like, after we get our house settled here. I saw Davidson about the plans to-day. I guess he thought the price would stagger me. 'Hang the expense!' I said to him. 'A man isn't married every day, and I want to put my wife in a house that will make people open their eyes.'"

"Yes," she said, vaguely. She was listening to that other voice, as the girl behind her had listened a year ago.

"And every time a story is sold," it said, "we'll have a new honeymoon trip—a long, lazy holiday with a lunch in some strange, little corner downtown that we have discovered ourselves, and a browse in queer streets and shops afterward; and, if anything is left, which isn't likely, we'll come home in a hansom. There never was such a jolly little comrade as you are; but, when we get home and talk it over, you'll be something even better than that—just the *sweetest* woman, the——"

"What's the matter?" asked the man opposite. "You're not eating anything. Here, try this. You mustn't get thin and go off your looks before the great day. I expect my wife to do me credit."

She shrank a moment from the look in his eyes before she recognized it. She had seen it turned on a great many things before—on his houses, his horses, his jewels, never fully on herself. She felt the humiliation of that glance of possession tingle through her nerves, but she answered lightly.

The voice at the table behind her fell in with her own.

"And to think it will always be like this," it said. "No matter how time goes by, you will always be you. Why, any change the years might give you would be only as though you had put on a new gown to make me love you a little bit better. The real you could never change; not from age, not from grief, not from anything in the world."

Their hands had met across the table now, she knew. Was there ever a hand in the world that had been so strong, so infinitely tender, as the one that touched that other girl's at the table there? She started as Roden's hand fell a trifle heavily on her own.

"I shouldn't call you the best company in the world to-night," he said. "It's a little early in the day for us to bore each other, I should think. I thought that most girls spent their lives trying to be entertaining. I never had any of them dull around me, at any rate." He laughed jocosely, with an attempt to veil his annoy-

ance. "Lord, as far as talk is concerned, I might as well have taken your aunt out. The old lady's a corker—when the conversation gets down to dollars and cents, at any rate. Well, she's a friend of mine, all right. Here's to her!"

He lifted his wine-glass. He had taken too much already, the girl thought. The blur of it was in his voice. There seemed a reckless set to his coarse features. It seemed as though her shame at the situation had gradually revealed the man as he was, primeval, brutal, an unclean braggart, a thing from which gentlemen would guard one. Her sudden sense of helplessness frightened her.

"And to take care of you always," said the voice behind her, "that is the most exquisite privilege of all—to have strength enough to shelter you from the big things and little things. It maddens me now, sometimes, to think what you are bearing for me; but, sweetheart, I shall spend my life in making it up to you. Don't let them frighten you; and when they say 'Poverty!' to you, say 'Love!' to yourself. And in a little while——"

"You'll lose that ring if you keep poking it up and down your finger like that," said Roden. "And a stone of that sort"—he pointed to it with the cigar in his thick fingers—"ain't to be picked up every day. I shouldn't be any too well pleased if you lost it, nor you, either, I guess. Lord, I've known women to give their souls for less than that."

He blew a ring of smoke in the air, and laughed, coarsely.

"After all, you're all alike, you women. Give a woman trinkets enough, and she'll be true to you, I've always said. It's the only kind of a rope you can hold 'em with. About right, too. Why, I remember now——"

"And as for doubting you," the voice behind her said, "it would be as impossible for me to doubt my own existence. No matter what happened, if every proof in the world were brought to me, I should *know* you were

true. You *couldn't* be anything else. You might be forced into doing a thing, I might hear that I was never even to look at you again, but I should know it was none of your doing. And whatever happens, dearest, you must remember that I am always thinking that—always."

The man opposite was scowling unpleasantly.

"Be a bit careful of that ring, can't you?" he said. "There, you've got it off altogether, now!"

"If it's ten years or twenty years," said the other voice, "no matter where or how far I might be, a word from you would bring me. I think, if you needed me, I could come back from the dead. Promise me that you will always remember that. But, as if you needed to promise! And, besides, I want you to tell me something else now—that always, and always——"

The girl brought her eyes back to Roden with a start.

"Yes," she said, with the realization that he had spoken, "you were saying——?"

"I was saying that it's about time we got out of this," he repeated. "What's the matter with you, anyway? I'm getting tired of saying a thing three times before you hear it. Here, you," he turned to the waiter, "get my coat. Put on your ring, and come on."

There was the snap of authority in his voice, the curl of it on his thick lips. The girl hesitated a moment. The stone of the ring she held in her open palm stared at her like a red, unwinking eye—hard, cold, bloodless—and

precious. She looked at it, lingeringly. There was a strange fascination in its depths.

"Well, come on," Roden snarled.

"Sweetheart!" said the low voice behind her; "sweetheart!"

The girl lifted her face, a face illumined, one that the man at her side had never before seen. She wore the look of one who, after helpless grasping in the dark, had come suddenly into the light, and knew the open path before her.

He resented, without comprehending, the expression with which she regarded him, the look which swept him from head to foot, and judged and condemned and derided.

"You had better take this," she said, slowly.

She handed the ring to Roden. The look of amazed consternation on his face, as he mechanically closed his fingers about the bauble, deepened at her smile.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Eh!"

"I will tell you as we go up-town," she said.

The untidy waiter held the portières at the narrow door obsequiously aside. He wondered why the pretty young woman, who had apparently angered her stout escort to the verge of apoplexy, should stop at the threshold to look back at an empty table. He could not know, being mere man and unimaginative, the wonderful promise of her eyes; still less that the tawdry room she left was a holy spot, wherein Love had called from his high places, and heard the answer of his faithful.



THE GREATER NEED

INQUISITIVE INDIVIDUAL—I understand, doctor, that you have discovered a radical cure for St. Vitus's dance?

EMINENT ESCULAPIAN—Yes, sir! And, with all modesty, I may say that it is the achievement of the age, a long-sought boon, which——

INQUISITIVE INDIVIDUAL—Er—h'm! Just so; but, look here—is it a remedy for the cake-walk, too?

A MEMBER OF THE HAUTE PÉGRE

By Prince Vladimir Vaniatsky

LOUIS, that estimable *maître d'hôtel*, came eagerly forward as I stepped into the almost deserted Maison Dorée. Louis took me to my usual table, straightened the already scrupulously straight cloth, and bent low over me.

"Monsieur le comte has been long away," he said, in a tone in which a certain deference and a certain friendliness were mingled.

"But I always come back to Paris," I declared, smiling, "and, once in Paris, to the Maison Dorée, and—to Louis."

Louis smiled, enigmatically.

"Monsieur's dinner is waiting for him," he said.

"How is that?" I asked.

"A gentleman called here this afternoon—a gentleman *très distingué*, with a ribbon of the Legion, monsieur—and ordered a dinner for two. It is a most excellent dinner. Then, he bade me have it ready at just this hour, saying that it would be served for you, and that he would appear at the precise moment the consommé is served."

"Quite interesting," I murmured; "but will you tell me what he has ordered for dinner?"

"The gentleman did not order," Louis explained; "he bade me prepare such a dinner as would please you. Therefore, it is made up of your favorite dishes. There is Consommé Autrichien, Turbot Casimir——"

"Enough!" I cried; "it is quite the dinner I would have ordered."

Just as the consommé was served, a tall man, irreproachably clad, came down the room under Louis's guidance.

"Good evening, monsieur le comte,"

the man said, and seated himself opposite me.

"Good evening, monsieur," I replied, looking sharply at him. He was not a handsome man, this dinner companion of mine, but he possessed an interesting appearance. He was thoroughly cosmopolitan. Not a gesture, not a feature, recalled any race or any country. He was the world's man.

When we were quite deserted, the man drew a card from his waistcoat-pocket and handed it to me. I read the name, a simple one, very carefully. Then, I noticed that it bore, in the upper, left-hand corner, a tiny fleck of black, as though a triangular spot of ink had fallen on the card.

"You are very welcome, Monsieur de Villemessant," I said. "You are well recommended."

"It is so," he returned, smiling. Then, across the dinner-table, he bandied a light conversation with me—one that showed a perfect familiarity with the world, with people, with myself, even. He was clever, clever as few men are in these days, and his tongue seemed barbed with brilliancy. A perfect dinner; wines, such as were to be found only in the cellars of the Maison Dorée, and a good companion—what more perfect evening could a man wish?

I am, I may say, a man of the world—I have encountered it in many phases in the fifty years which comprise my existence. The name of Count Pierre de Deux Ponts is not unknown. Indeed, I flatter myself that it is quite the contrary. Do I walk down the boulevards, I hear whispers pass about me.

If I appear at the Opéra, at the Théâtre Français, or even at Antoine's, I see heads turned as people point me out. I have been called the last of the boulevardiers. But there is always a "last of the boulevardiers," though few have been as persistently the last as I.

We had taken our coffee and liqueurs, pausing to light our Havanas, such only as the blessed may smoke. Then, M. de Villemessant and I rose together.

"If monsieur will honor me by coming to my apartments," I ventured, "we may talk in peace and quiet, concerning the errand on which monsieur has, doubtless, come."

He bowed gravely, in confirmation of my invitation. Together, we passed through the glass doors to the rue Lafitte, preferring that exit to the more prominent one, on the brilliantly lighted Boulevard des Italiens.

We had scarcely paused a minute on the pavement, when a fiacre drew up to the curb. I glanced at the man on the box.

"Well met, Jean Cambon," I said, and gave him a pleasant nod.

"Ah, it is monsieur le comte, back again!" cried Jean; and he twirled his whip through the air, and, with a quick twist of the reins, turned his horse into a prancing animal.

"The rue de la Barouillière, Jean," I said, as we stepped into the fiacre.

"You are, indeed, well known," declared M. de Villemessant, as he drew a fragrant whiff of his cigar.

"I have been absent from Paris four years, monsieur," I said, simply; "yet, I find I am not forgotten. Good Sainte Génévieve has every Parisian under her patronage, you must remember, monsieur."

He laughed, shortly, as though asking why such a notorious man as Pierre de Deux Ponts should believe in the patronage of Sainte Génévieve.

"Come, come, monsieur," I cried; "why should I not believe in Sainte Génévieve? You, doubtless, believe that it is good luck to gamble with borrowed money, and have given a louis to a hunchback, to let you rub his

hunch, before you enter into the salles at Monte Carlo."

"Ah, it is so, monsieur le comte, it is so. I was wrong to laugh."

When the good Jean brought us before the door of the house on the rue de la Barouillière, where I have kept an apartment for many years, I gave him a liberal douceur. It is good to feel in one's absence that one is not forgotten.

When M. de Villemessant entered the drawing-room of my apartment, he paused for a moment on the threshold. Then, I laughed.

"Enter, Count of Raday!" I cried. He turned, and looked at me in great surprise. But he stepped into the room, furnished with odd things, and hung with paintings and tapestries which I have picked up in the four quarters of the globe. A great Japanese lantern of bronze, which hung from the centre of the room, gave the only light. But I touched a button at the door, and the silver sconces and the big candelabra from Versailles sprang into a white glow.

Imhof, my man, stepped into the room, and wheeled two big chairs and a low table before the fireplace. He bent over the hearth, and, in a minute, a fire of crackling, resinous logs perfumed the room with the healthy odor of burning wood. Then, Imhof brought a cabinet and placed it on the table, throwing back the polished cover to disclose a number of bottles and tiny glasses. Still another cabinet was brought, and the lid disclosed long, moist cigars, as fresh as when they left the maker's hands in far-off Havana.

"The Count of Raday will please himself," I said, as Imhof paused.

"Let it be absinthe, then, monsieur," the count replied. In a second, Imhof had prepared the glass, with the water dripping down into the translucent green of the depths.

"Monsieur de Raday seemed surprised that I should know his name," I said, "but he should not be. It is my business to know every one. Monsieur de Raday and I have played, side by side, in the salles at Monte

Carlo; we have been within a footstep of each other on the Ringstrasse, in Vienna; we have witnessed the performance at the Acacias, within three feet of each other; we have traveled in the same compartment of the Rapide from Paris to Nice. On the last occasion, Monsieur de Raday even played cards with me. Yet, he does not think I remember him."

"Just heaven, monsieur le comte," cried he, "you are a most interesting man."

"No, monsieur," I replied, "I am an interested man. The two are quite different."

Imhof discreetly withdrew from the room, and I was left quite alone with Count de Raday, a member of the Imperial Household of the Emperor-King of Austria-Hungary.

"Monsieur de Raday may be interested in my collection of Bartolozzi engravings," I suggested, "or, if his taste runs that way, I have a few very interesting little bits of work by Albrecht Dürer."

"I must confess, monsieur," Count Raday answered, "that I am not a connoisseur in art."

"Ah?" I responded. "Then you have come to see me on business," I intimated, "or the mark of Imre is wrong."

"It is so, sir," he answered.

"Good!" I cried. "But I must warn you that the business must be—"

"Ah, it is, monsieur le comte, it is. It is a strange request which I have to make of you. Yet, when I make it, you must remember that I represent, not the Count of Raday, but the Archduke Maximilian-Otto, and, through him, his Majesty, Franz Josef." I bowed at the mention of the distinguished names. "Monsieur le comte," he continued, brushing a bit of dust from his coat, "there is a package of letters belonging to the archduke, which have, in some way, become lost to view. It is unknown whether they are lost or not. Yet, those papers cannot be found. I may say, frankly, monsieur, that they

affect one of the most serious issues in Austria to-day, being connected with the right of succession to the Hungarian throne. Should those papers fall into the hands of a certain faction, they would be held in reserve until the death of his Apostolic Majesty. Then, if nothing occurs to prevent, and the faction, to which I refer, could act unhampered, the result would be the division of the dual kingdom, and the establishment of the Kingdom of Hungary, as a separate state, instead of a coalescent state of Austria."

"And, further," I suggested, "if those papers should fall into the hands of the faction to which you have referred, they would be used in placing upon the Hungarian throne a youth whose weak mental powers and whose vicious excesses would make him the tool of some one powerful man."

"Monsieur le comte is then familiar with Austrian politics?"

"In a superficial manner," I made answer.

"Then, perhaps, monsieur le comte, you will lend the archduke your aid in his efforts to regain these most important papers? The archduke throws himself completely upon your mercy. To be perfectly candid, monsieur, the Emperor-King is not aware that those papers are other than in their proper place."

"I am unaware, Count de Raday," I replied, coldly, "of how I can help the archduke. I am not a detective; nor do I know in what manner I might be of service to the archduke. If I could, I would gladly help him. As it is, I am powerless."

Count Raday turned nervously in his chair, taking a long drink of his absinthe.

"Monsieur le comte, it has been suggested," he replied, with emphasis upon the last word, "that, through your widely varied career, you may have come in contact with some men whom we may call 'chevaliers d'industrie'—men who are occasionally entangled in political affairs, and who are not over-scrupulous as to the means they use in attaining their ends."

"Pish!" I retorted. "I do not know that any man who dabbles in *weltpolitik* is over-scrupulous as to the means of achieving an end. You might be referring to a prime minister, or a *vaurien*. They are equally careless of what the world considers honorable means."

The Count of Raday was silent.

"Suppose, monsieur," I suggested, "you tell me the manner in which the archduke is supposed to have lost the papers."

"It is unknown," he answered.

"Have there been no events which connect themselves with the papers, either before or after their disappearance? Has the archduke shown them to any one outside the Hapsburg family and its advisers?"

"I did my best to keep him from it," Count Raday said, "but he did show them to a friend."

"*Cherchez la femme?*"

"Alas, yes, monsieur. She is a beautiful woman, young, married to one of our attachés of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Baroness Clothilde Parhazy is her name. But she has been under the espionage of the secret police, and every place connected with her has been thoroughly searched."

"Your police are quite careful." I spoke with an inward smile, for I had once suffered inspection at the hands of the Austrian police. They were not successful in the search, I may add. The reason is very simple. When they were searching my apartments in Vienna, that for which they looked was in Brussels, carefully guarded by my man, Imhof.

"Is there any suspicion attached to the baroness?" I inquired.

"On the archduke's part, no; for my part, I suspect every woman."

"That is ungallant and unwise, monsieur. I trust every woman. The result is better."

"Ah, monsieur, now that I have told you, let me return to the archduke, and inform him that you will aid us in this frightful trouble. You do not realize what it means to his

Imperial Highness. Should the Emperor discover the loss of the papers—and it may occur at any time—it may mean that the archduke will go into exile, or that he be deprived of his rank and titles."

"Come, monsieur," I answered, "I will help the archduke. But he must come to Paris. I can help him only through himself. Bid him be here in as short a time as possible. Let him go to the Hôtel Bristol attended by his suite. He will be entertained and fêted. But this I must demand, that at every entertainment he gives an invitation be sent to me. Then, when my conclusions are completed, I will see what is to be done. Between us, Count de Raday, my suspicions rest in a quarter of which you would not dream, and they have no connection with the Baroness Clothilde." I turned to the count, as though to inform him that our interview was at an end.

"Thank you, monsieur!" he cried. "Where the greatest detectives have failed, you may succeed. You know men; they know only criminals."

"No compliments, I beg, monsieur." I extended my hand to him.

The Paris papers found much cause for comment in the presence of the archduke. The fact that he was surrounded by his retinue, and traveled in state, could mean but one thing. His mission to Paris was on matters politic. A rapprochement between France and Austria was discussed, and a thousand and one conjectures hazarded. But even the astute journalists are sometimes wrong. They cannot read between lines when there is a secret meaning purposely placed therein. So, the world knew that the Archduke Maximilian-Otto was in Paris on a mission from the Emperor.

The archduke and I met frequently, and from him I learned the whole secret of the papers, and the course they had pursued from the time they left the archives of the imperial house of Hapsburg, to the day they disap-

peared from the view of Maximilian-Otto, greatly to his distress.

Twice, I dined with the archduke, and I was present at a musicale he gave, when he showed me much attention. *Tout Paris*, the shallow, mocking world which had turned a cold shoulder upon me five years before, again remembered my presence. Romantic stories were told of my lengthy absence. I had found a diamond mine. I had been to the Klondike. I had inherited a fortune. I had won an immense amount of money at cards. All, all, equally foolish.

The archduke had been in Paris a week when Count de Raday, as Master of the Household to the Archduke Maximilian-Otto, came to my apartment.

"Have you found no clue, as yet, monsieur?" he inquired.

"I am satisfied," I responded.

"But when can you hope to let us know where the papers are?"

"It will all be in good time, monsieur," I replied; "all in good time. Meanwhile, may I have the permission of the archduke to entertain, at a dinner, in his honor? Much depends upon my ability to have the right people gathered around the archduke at a certain time. Bring the matter before him, and let me know upon what day you decide."

"But the guests? From what rank of society?"

"I will submit my invitation list to the archduke," I answered. "But he will not strike off one name, for there will be no one to whom he can take exception. The guests will be, principally, from the Faubourg St. Germain. The others will all be people known to his Imperial Highness."

"How many are involved?" Count de Raday asked.

"Directly, one; indirectly, one thousand."

It was on a Thursday that I gave my long-to-be-remembered dinner in honor of the Archduke Maximilian-Otto, of Austria-Hungary. It was a small dinner of forty covers, and was laid in the dining-room of my apartment. I do not live in a shabby style,

though the late count, my father, left me an inheritance of eight thousand francs and my title.

My guests were from the Faubourg, from the Jockey Club, from the Cercle of the rue Royale, and from the embassies. The Austrian ambassador was there, and the representatives of other great powers.

When the dinner was finished, Imhof appeared in the door of the dining-room, followed by three other servants. Each bore a tray laden with closely wrapped packages, sealed tightly at the ends. Imhof, alone, bore one package on his salver, a casket of golden filigree, in which was yet another casket of solid metal, locked with a tiny padlock.

Then I rose and, addressing my guests, begged that the little souvenirs of the dinner which I had prepared would not be opened until after the guests had reached their homes. It was a unique request, and a buzz of conversation greeted it.

As I escorted the archduke to his carriage, I handed him a key.

"It will unlock the inner casket," I explained, "and, in future, your Imperial Highness had better keep all papers in the secret archives of the Hapsburgs." No one heard the words save Raday, and, except us three, no one in the world knows how certain state papers of Austria rested for three months in the safe-deposit vaults of a great Paris bank, in a box labeled, "Count Pierre de Deux Ponts."

You will ask how I came by the papers, and why.

The answer is very simple. I am one of the chevaliers d'industrie to whom the Count de Raday referred; yet, I am, also, at the head of a noble house. Despite all that I could do, I found my social position slipping from me. Whispers began to run through the ears of Paris that Pierre de Deux Ponts did not respect certain laws of France, and that he was under the supervision of the *gardiens de la paix*.

It took me almost two years to obtain the papers for whose return the archduke was so anxious. But, once

in my hands, they were safe from all outside interference. I know how to cover my tracks. That Count de Raday should have come to me for help was not strange, for it had been so contrived that the suggestion would be made for such a move.

But, to-day, *tout Paris*, shallow and fickle as of old, flocks to my apartment in the avenue Wagram; is on my drag at Auteuil and Longchamps; in my

box at the Opéra, and comes for the shooting at my château.

I think the archduke suspects; yet he sends me a costly present every year. He is not ungrateful, and, after all, it taught him a lesson in prudence. For that alone he should be thankful.

Another member of the Haute Pégre might have used the papers in a far different manner. Not so Pierre de Deux Ponts.



THE PATH ACROSS THE MOOR

ONE harvest evening as I took the road from Glenties fair,
I o'ertook a red-lipped *cailín** of modest mien and air;
So pleasant our discoursing was, it grieved me, to be sure,
When she said, at length, "Good-bye, kind sir, my path's across the moor."

I looked upon her wistfully—her gaze fell on the grass.
"It's lonesome walking, is the moor," I said, "*mo chailín deas*;†
The path is not so narrow, but there's room for two, I'm sure;
If you don't object, I'll take with you the path across the moor."

"The moon is up, the path is straight," she answered, courteously,
"And I never do feel lonesome when I'm crossing of Tíree;
I thank you very kindly, sir, but to my father's door
I've always took the path alone," she said, "across the moor."

"That the path's both safe and pleasant, too, for one, I'm sure is true;
But you guess not its delights," I said, "when jogged along by two."
"A kind good-bye, pray, gentle sir! My father he is poor,
And I, a humble maid, have never been beyond the moor."

"You do your father wrong," I said, "for his is wealth untold,
The King of Royal Spain is not so rich for all his gold.
And rank and worldly riches, they for me have little lure—
I'd barter both, with you to walk henceforth across the moor!"

I looked into her tender eyes; she blushed and cast them down.
I touched my lips upon her hand; still Rosie did not frown.
I took her hands in both of mine, and prisoned them secure,
And she murmured, "You may join me on the path across the moor."

SEUMAS MACMANUS.

* Colleen, little girl.

† My pretty little girl (*mo cholleen dyass*).



IN civilized countries, it is illegal for a man to marry until he is old enough to know better.

WHEN McCREADY TURNED MISSIONARY

By Anne O'Hagan

McCREADY was looking at Miss Crystal with the glazed eye of disapproval. One or two of the staff, taking note of his lowering brow and his hanging jaw, and following his gaze, concluded that he was dissatisfied with her work, and confided to one another that they, also, had marked its lack of "go."

Miss Crystal sat at her desk, oblivious of the brief attention she was attracting, her gray eyes heavy, her full, scarlet lips fallen into a curve of purposeless unhappiness. Even her red hair, usually vivid enough to redeem her from a look of listlessness, seemed unaccountably lacking in brilliancy that day.

As a question of fact, McCready's disapproval was personal, and not professional, that morning. He had never objected to the commonplace level of Miss Crystal's "stories." He had said, once or twice, that there was enough cheap flippancy, enough mock pathos and enough sham philosophy in the paper, and that her clear, cool English was a joy after the perfervid rhetoric of the "stars." Besides that, he had intimated that it was a priceless blessing to *The Cry* to have in its employ a woman who bore herself like a lady, and who could thus gain admission to places where "Alice Ben Bolt" would be *persona non grata*.

To-day, he was scowling over the possibility that he had been mistaken in Miss Crystal, after all. He was seeing her as he had seen her the night before, seated at a table in Curate's. Curate's was the newest and most ornate of all the after-theatre resorts. Lights winked from a thousand yellow-

brown eyes along the bronze-leather walls, music trickled sentimentally from an unexpected gallery railed in green and bronze. Ladies, the conscientious brilliancy of whose complexions and jewels ought to have atoned for the somewhat tarnished luster of their minds, ate and drank expensively with escorts of callow ecstasy or of satiated self-indulgence, while other women studied them with frank insolence, or ignored them blandly.

It was not a social lapse to be seen at Curate's. McCready's own gray-haired wife and his young drayd of a daughter had sat under his bristling protection, and had recognized only gaiety and glitter in the scene. But Miss Crystal had had no such chaperonage. Mr. Crawford Duncan could not be esteemed by even the most casual and innocent-eyed of observers, a well-chosen companion for a young woman. To McCready, who knew, as all the town did, his standing as a roué of parts, a libertine of attractions even more potent than his reputation, the sight had been painful. The fact that in some indefinable way the girl—a shining vision against the dull wall, with her red hair, her yellow bodice, and the glass of yellow wine with which she played—had fitted into her surroundings, had not lessened McCready's distaste for them. He had not the soul of an artist, McCready, and certain harmonies did not appeal to him.

"Damn it!" he said to himself, "she must know his reputation. She must know his wife." A vision of the drab little bearer of Mr. Duncan's name, with the thin, uncertain smile that was

the result—or the cause—of Mr. Duncan's wanderings, flashed before him. He remembered her in her box at the opera, in her victoria on the Avenue, always pitifully dwarfed by the splendor of her appurtenances. McCready, city editor of *The Cry*, was not in society, and he knew the little woman only in her public and official appearances. But they were enough. Miss Crystal, newspaper woman, no mere child, must know approximately all that he knew. If she chose to dine alone with the man, it was none of McCready's business. He was no reformer, to be looking out for the morals of his staff. But he had not thought her that sort, and—

He rang the bell sharply. "Tell Miss Crystal to come here," he growled, sinking his chin in his collar, and scowling prodigiously. The boy obeyed with cheerful alacrity. Miss Crystal blushed a little as she came forward. She had seen her grim chief the night before, and she was not used to being unconventional.

"Mornin'," said McCready. "Nothing much to-day. Wedding out in Glen Ridge. A Miss Greyer—this afternoon, at four."

"Do they want it reported?" asked Miss Crystal, a premonition of rebuffs chilling her. She hated to "do society" in any of its guises.

"Sure to. They always do, no matter what they pretend," said McCready, with the conviction of a man who does not have to put his faith to the test. Miss Crystal did not attempt to controvert the favorite axiom of her editor, unless her colorless smile could be construed as argument.

"Anyway," pursued McCready, "they are friends of the old man, and you'll be all right. Dick, look up trains to Glen Ridge for Miss Crystal."

When, finally, the door of the city room closed upon her departing figure, McCready ruminated: "See how that'll strike her. Wedding—'Voice that breathed'—tum, tum, te-tum!—'Cherish so long as ye both shall—' Maybe, she'll come to her senses. She can't want to do wrong, and there's no half-

way with Duncan—not for a woman in her position. With one of his own set, perhaps—well, maybe, if she were as heartless as he."

Later, lunching with Williamson, the advertising man, he had anxiously inquired—veiling both question and anxiety under gruff declaration—if women were not always sentimentalists, turned into the paths of peace or of disquietude by the mere influence of the moment, played upon by moods, likely to become as little children if they heard an old tune. And when Williamson indifferently agreed, McCready banished the furrow from his forehead and the fear from his heart, telling himself again that "the wedding service would fetch her."

Commonly, Miss Crystal loathed her work. She deeply disliked attending "parties" to which she had not been invited, and putting questions to persons who did not wish to answer them. She had never outgrown a tradition that such things were ill-bred, and she found it in her heart to forgive many counter-examples of ill-breeding because of her perception of their justification. Her talents, however, were not enough to advance her to a more dignified place in her profession, and her attainments in other directions prevented a change of calling.

To-day, she welcomed the quiet of the brief journey. She would devote it, not to the planning of questions in regard to Miss Greyer's trousseau or wedding-presents or bridesmaids' names—not even to reading the two-line clipping which Mr. McCready had given her as a guide, but entirely to her own situation.

Should she, or should she not? Life was dull, work was monotonous, she was unutterably lonely now that there was no longer a home, either the home of her old affections or the home of the dreams she had once dreamed, to give her a sense of companionship and love. Her eyes grew hard as she surveyed the flying landscape, and the red line of her lips spelt bitterness.

It is not good to sneer at one's past when one plans one's future. She

sneered at the thought of the home she had dreamed of during her engagement, six years before, to Owen Bromley—a little place, all climbing roses in Summer and hearth-fires in Winter, and walks and peaceful twilight talks together—and love!

Then, when her father had died, how tranquilly Owen had yielded to her suggestion that he should not be hampered in the very beginning of his career as an engineer by an engagement with a girl who had a mother to support! And now she had not heard of him for four years—not even when, after three years, her mother had died. Ah, well! perhaps he had not heard. And even if he had, and had come, there would have been no glow in the welcome to him. The youth was gone from her, then, she told herself, and she did not care.

She could not tell when the craving for excitement first took hold of her—some time, she supposed, when the healthy pleasures of young womanhood had been too long withheld, when the routine of her days had dulled her sensitiveness a little. Then she had obtained her stimulant; a flush crept over her face, the counterpart of the one McCready had seen the night before. She had met Crawford Duncan; it was not for nothing that silly women called him fascinating. She had drifted, and now she could drift no more, she knew, clothe his demands in what words of friendship or respect he would.

Friendship! She laughed. Was it much friendship that had cut lines about his mouth, burned hollows about his eyes? All that he asked, he said, was some few of the intimacies of mere friendship—the chance to see her, occasionally, alone, not in a glittering, noisy restaurant, with a table between them and hunger dividing their interest in each other; only an opportunity to talk to her, sometimes, alone, to persuade her that he was not so black a villain as he was commonly painted. She was a working-woman, he told her, therefore above the stupid, small conventionalities. What

did it matter that she had no chaperon, or that she did not know his wife?

"I wonder," she said to herself, "how many women are driven to folly and to sin by mere boredom, by the desire to keep hold of the one excitement of their lives? And I used to think that only unhappy love could force one out of the way of peace and dignity! Unhappy love, indeed!"

"Glen Ridgel!" shouted the conductor; and she hurried out of the train.

She walked toward the Greyer house. She was blind for a while to the beauty of the day, and her mind kept repeating his words of last night. "We cannot go on like this any longer. You must give me something, show some trust in me, in my deep regard for you. To-morrow must end it, one way or the other. Unless you will grant me the little that I ask—a little share in your life—that is all—then I shall give you up entirely."

"It would be very stupid if he went away, really," she said to herself. "And, perhaps, after all, he means what he says."

Then, her eyes caught sight of a sloping lawn with cherry-trees white upon it, and her heart gave a leap. How long had it been since she had seen the Spring come to the countryside!

She reached the Greys' house with her own problems half-forgotten. The delicious warmth of the air, the stirrings in the billowy-blossomed trees, the look of the April sky—all these were of another world from the fevered one in which she had been dwelling. The two could not co-exist. She deferred her decisions.

The house was of gray stone, broad and stately. Imposing drives cut its long stretch of lawn; pale wistaria clung to its rough sides; back of it, an orchard was beautiful. It was so fair, so peaceful a place that Miss Crystal forgot, in her content with it, to be envious of those to whom it belonged. A kindly glow pervaded her for the bride who was to go forth from a

shelter so perfect as this to the dearer one that love should make for her.

"No, no; you can't find out nothin' now," whispered the man at the door, who had intercepted her ring. "The party's just comin' down to the library, now, miss. The ceremony is just goin' to begin. Afterward, Mr. Cartwright—he's the best man, miss—will see the reporters."

She nodded, her eyes wandering to the trees before the house.

"If you'll step inside, miss," went on the butler, "I think I could stand you on the stairs, where you could have a lovely view of the ceremony."

Again Miss Crystal smiled and nodded. A white vision leaning upon an elderly arm was just disappearing from the hall into the embowered room at its end, as the butler motioned her to a place on the stairs. She looked in, upon the great room, the somberness of its books contending with the glory of blossoms, the lights from its high, colored windows giving it a church-like air. She saw the centre picture, the white robes of the clergyman, the white dress of the bride, the half-encircling wall of pink and black where the rose-hued bridesmaids and the ushers stood, behind them the blurred gaiety of the wedding-party. Then, she looked at the figure beside the slender bride. The vague smile died from her lips, the pleased light from her eyes. That immaculate figure, that clear-cut face, were those of her old lover. It was Owen Bromley's wedding that she had blindly come out to report.

The brief service seemed to her interminable. In its length, she was able to see again all her own early hopes and wistful fancies—dead long since, dead with what she had called her love, but somehow alive enough to be outraged now by this scene with its miserable contrasts.

"Let me out!" she cried, fiercely, to the astonished butler, as the solemn words ceased, and a sudden flurry of laughter and talk and crowding about the bridal pair began, while from the music-room across the hall the organ

notes of the wedding-march pealed jubilantly.

"Why, I thought—" he began.

"Never mind, never mind that! Let me out!" And he opened the door, and stared at her in uncomprehending disapproval as she fled down the path.

Once beyond the high arbor-vitæ hedge that screened the Greyer place from vulgar observation, she hurried along, she knew not in what direction. It was monstrous that she, working hard, working alone, so wretched and companionless that she could contemplate temptation without shrinking—it was monstrous that she should be sent to witness the prosperous—oh, the very highly prosperous!—wedding of the man whom she had once expected to marry herself! That she should have to report the wedding of Owen Bromley! How had it happened? She tore at her purse, jerked the clipping from it. Idiot that she had been not to have looked before! The statement was perfectly clear:

On Tuesday, April 26, Miss Henrietta Greyer, the youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Greyer, will be married to Mr. Owen Bromley, son of the late Owen Bromley, of Baltimore. The wedding will take place at four o'clock in the afternoon, at the Greyer place in Glen Ridge.

If only she had read that in time, and had spared herself this bitter humiliation!

At any rate, she knew one thing now, she told herself, as she hurried along. She would never sacrifice one moment's enjoyment, one moment's promise of enjoyment, for any hope of good or any memory of good. Of course, she had no love now for the correct, self-seeking man back there—it had been long since she had had it; but, oh, how tenderly she had thought she loved him in the foolish days when she offered him the chance to make a swifter, surer, steadier way to success without her! And he was marrying—correctly, advantageously—and she supposed that she might report his wife's receptions when they were in town next Winter!

On and on she fled, careless as to whither. April was powerless now to win a look from her. Henceforth, she told herself, planning a new, bitter rule of life, henceforth, she would take what the gods provided. She had an insane sense of revenging herself upon Owen Bromley when she made this resolve. She would flirt, she would extract the utmost of mirth from each moment as it came. Hitherto, she had always rather held aloof from the noisy gaiety, the hail-fellow-well-met intimacies of the office. But, for the future, these—anything, everything! To-day it was Crawford Duncan who offered her excitement, comradeship of a sort—love, he would call it, as soon as she gave him the chance to speak! Well, she would take it all! And when that was over, she would not be so old or so unlovely that others should not minister to her craving for admiration and attention. After all, it might not soon be over. Surely, Crawford Duncan could love as truly and as long as that man back there whom she had heard vowing to endow with all his worldly goods the millionaire's daughter.

Again she heard the triumphant swelling of the organ, and her mind supplied familiar words:

"Valiant and free—faithful confessed—"

The mockery, the mockery of that! Her rage gave place to self-pity as she remembered.

At the top of a high hill, she recollected that she had no idea of her whereabouts. A broad valley, foaming with blossoming orchards, tender with an infinitude of Spring greens, lay below her, a faint mist veiling the perfect glory of the afternoon. She saw towns on the slopes of the distant hillsides flash into being; she saw houses, here and there, in the big bowl below her; she saw a narrow river gleam among the verdure. But all the region was totally unfamiliar to her town eyes. She hesitated. The hill was bordered on one side by a heavy growth of trees, and she thought that she heard sounds among them. She

wished to inquire her whereabouts and her road back to the city; so, she waited, listening, and suddenly very weak from hurry, emotion and the languor of the season.

A laugh rippled upon the air; then came a shrill cry of delight—a child's cry; then, a confused, bubbling sound of young voices. They came from out the wood, part way down the hill. She ventured on, and when she came opposite the place where she had fixed them in her mind she called, "Children!"

There was no answer, and the weariness that had attacked her so suddenly after the intensity of her excitement and resolutions grew greater at the sight of the long descent to the plain, and of the longer journey to the nearest house. She paused a moment, then left the road, parting the bushes near it carefully, and made her way into the wood recess.

"Children!" she called again, as the young trees near the edge of the grove closed behind her. Still there was silence, except for the tremulous voices of the Spring afternoon. But she pressed on, farther into the cool, green light. The sound of a trickling stream became her guide.

By-and-bye she came upon it—a thread, winding in and out among rocks and the roots of trees it had bared from their covering of earth. And, following it, she found the children, three of them, lying flat on their stomachs, their faces peering into the brook where it had widened and calmed for a moment, into a pool.

"Oh, there you are!" cried Miss Crystal, happily. To have found guides now seemed to her a real good fortune, little as she would have allowed the possibility of that an hour before.

"Oh, *please* hush!" entreated the fat little girl of the trio, barely looking up, and waving a chubby hand of rebuke in the direction of Miss Crystal. "There, he's gone! She's frightened him!" She rolled around to a sitting posture with a good deal of plump difficulty, as her companions righted themselves and stared at Miss Crystal.

"Oh, I'm sorry I intruded!" said that young woman, meeting three pairs of reproachful eyes. "But I'm lost, and I heard your voices; you were talking, yourselves, a while ago."

"Yes," said the larger boy, in a tone of righteous judgment. "We were, but that was before we saw the fish. We thought he might be a trout! He was under the shelf of that rock there." He pointed to a boulder that projected a foot or two in the water.

"Indeed, I'm sorry," apologized the interrupter. "But since I have spoiled your afternoon's sport, won't you tell me where I am and how to get away?"

The younger boy looked at her gravely. The severe aspect of his round face was not lightened, as was the other boy's, by any redeeming freckles near his blue eyes. He was all judgment, untempered by levity of any sort.

"It depends," he announced, "on which way you want to go."

"She wants to go to New York," declared the little girl, promptly, giving one indifferent glance at Miss Crystal's brown frock, and proceeding to dig diligently in the soft earth with her heel.

"Do you?" asked the younger boy. Miss Crystal nodded; she also smiled. And when Miss Crystal smiled like that—frankly, whole-heartedly, youthfully—she was a very pretty woman. The older boy noted this, though he could not have defined it. He brushed aside all question of destination.

"Say," he said, while the Solomon of the party still revolved in his mind the question of routes, "I could show you some white violets if you had time."

Miss Crystal was very tired. Her knees were weak. She suddenly be-thought herself that it is not good to go luncheonless on an enervating day in Spring, and that it is never invigorating to give one's self up to rages and disappointments. She sat down on a stump, rather suddenly.

"I am afraid I haven't time," she answered, a trifle faintly. "Some other day, perhaps."

"Huh!" sniffed the little girl, in

swift disdain of this banality. "How long do you think white violets stay?"

"That's true, they are brief-lived, aren't they? But how shall I get to New York?"

"Do you want to go on a train or a trolley?" persisted the accurate youth.

"Whichever will take me the quicker." Miss Crystal looked at her watch; it was after five o'clock.

"That's a pretty watch," declared the girl, who had drawn near the stump.

"I'm glad you like it," replied Miss Crystal, courteously.

"Did your mother give it to you?"

"No."

"If you want to go to New York quickly, you had better go on the train. Don't you know where you are at?"

Miss Crystal shook her head. She felt more and more wearied.

"Well, you're at Preston's—that is, you're near Preston's, and if you get there in time, they'll flag a train for you."

"What time?" asked Miss Crystal, struggling to her feet.

"Oh, any time when there's a train coming along."

The bigger boy had disappeared at a bend in the brook. He came back now, flushed and bare-headed, carrying his hat in his hand. With very earthy fingers he presented it to her.

"There are the violets," he said, briefly.

Miss Crystal looked at him and at his gift. Cool and starry-white in the torn lining of his cap the flowers lay, their silken stems still flecked with damp mold. He flushed, uncomfortably, beneath the sudden, pitiful gratitude of her glance.

"I got 'em for you!" he said. "Ain't you goin' to take 'em?"

"You should say, 'aren't you going to take them,'" corrected the little girl.

"I am," said Miss Crystal, tears in her eyes. "I am, and I'm going to keep them."

"Oh, they don't last long," said the boy.

"If you're coming to Preston's," announced the younger boy, patiently, "you'd better come. We've got to go home in time to wash our hands before tea."

"Oh, I am thoughtless," cried the woman, springing to her feet. "And were you going to take me to the station?"

"Of course," said the trio, briefly and simultaneously.

The green light in the woods faded to a green twilight. The soft breeze fluttered into stillness; the brook's ripple, the evening calling of birds, sounded together. From some pool in the woods the frogs set up their loud Spring cry. The solemn boy possessed himself of one of Miss Crystal's hands, the girl of the other. The giver of the violets shuffled along at one side, nonchalantly switching at the bushes. He was still blushing over the access of sentiment which had prompted his offering, but he whistled and switched the more strenuously to hide his embarrassment.

"Some time I am coming to see you," declared Miss Crystal, earnestly, as the station-agent shambled out to flag the train. She was a woman of impulses. The half-hour in the dim grove, with the sweetness of the earth in her nostrils and the sight of the children in her eyes, seemed to her now miraculous, a sacred wonder wrought for her salvation. "I am coming to see you surely. I am glad you told me your names, Amy and Lawrence and Joe. You have been very kind to me. I shall not forget."

"Oh, it wasn't anything," declared the big boy. "It's on our way home, anyway."

Then, they watched her swing aboard the train, and stood, the boys with their caps decorously in hand, to catch her farewell smile and the wave of her hand.

The door of the telephone booth was open. McCready noticed with a grim amusement that Miss Crystal went at once to it, and did not go to her desk to begin work when she came in. He heard her call. Indeed, it must be recorded that McCready did not conscientiously try to avoid hearing the call.

"Is that Mr. Duncan? Yes? This is Miss Crystal, Mr. Duncan. I shall not be at home this evening. You remember I promised to let you know. No, no. Oh, no, thank you! No. It is quite impossible. To-morrow? I think it a very excellent plan, and I hope that you will have a very pleasant voyage. Good-bye."

Even through a telephone receiver, McCready thought, a man must perceive and appreciate the finality of Miss Crystal's tones.

"I'm sorry, Mr. McCready," began Miss Crystal, appearing at the desk. "I forgot to get the names of the ushers and the list of the guests. I—I felt suddenly ill during the ceremony, and came away."

"Let it go," mumbled McCready. "Big strike ordered at the cotton works in Fall River; no room for weddings, anyway, to-morrow. And now, Miss Crystal, Mrs. McCready wants you to come up to dinner with us to-night—oh, yes, perfectly informally. No one else there but Walton. You know Walton, don't you? No? One of the editorial writers. Do come. Mrs. McCready begged you to waive formality. She ought to have called, and all that, but you're a busy woman—and—that's right. I'll be ready in fifteen minutes."

And, as McCready went off himself to telephone—taking the precaution to close the door of the booth, however—he said to himself, in simple-minded triumph: "I knew the wedding service would fetch her!"

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A MAN'S pride that he is a man is apt to be rudely shaken if he notices his fellow-men.

A SONG OF LOVES

IN the blue morn, the new morn,
 Beneath a sun-filled sky,
 Oh, I met a little Love
 When all the clouds were high;
 A little Love, a wistful Love—
 I would not have him stay;
 I loosed his hands, and kissed his lips,
 And bade him fly away.

In the warm noon, the sweet noon,
 When all the air was gold,
 Oh, I met a fair, great Love
 With merry eyes and bold;
 So wise, so strong, so wonderful,
 Too high for my estate,
 He loosed my hands, and kissed my lips,
 And left me desolate.

In the deep night, the cold night,
 Who comes through wind and rain?
 Little Love I bade away
 Is at my side again.
 And he hath warmed my hands in his,
 And kissed my wet eyes dry.
 Oh, strange that he should comfort me
 For that great Love gone by.

JOHN WINWOOD.



HOW IT HAPPENED

THE CHRONIC MEDDLER—You are extremely bald, for one of your age.
 THE BARE-PATED PARTY—Yes; got this way by butting into other people's affairs.



LIMITED SPACE

ASKINGTON—Your flat is rather small, isn't it?
 CRAMPSMITH—Yes! It's an actual fact that we haven't room for a doubt in it.

VERS DE SOCIÉTÉ IN FOREIGN TONGUES

By Brander Matthews

“FAMILIAR verse” is the apt term Cowper preferred to describe the lyric of mingled sentiment and playfulness which is more generally and more carelessly called *vers de société*. The lyric of this sort is less emotional, or at least less expansive, than the regular lyric; and it seeks to veil the depth of its feeling behind a debonair assumption of gaiety. Familiar verse is in poetry closely akin to what in prose is known as the eighteenth-century essay; Prior and Gay were early representatives of the one, as Steele and Addison were the creators of the other. Familiar verse is a far better designation than *vers de société* for two reasons: first, because the use of a French phrase might seem to imply that these witty and graceful poems are more abundant in French literature than in English—which is not so; and second, because, however light and bright these lyrics may be, they are not mere society-verses, with only the glitter and the emptiness of the fashionable parade. They are not the idle amusement of those

Who tread with jaded step the weary mill—
Grind at the wheel, and call it “pleasure”
still;

Gay without mirth, fatigued without employ,
Slaves to the joyless phantom of a joy.

No doubt, the true *vers de société* must have polish and finish and the well-bred ease of the man of the world; but they ought also to carry a suggestion at least of the more serious aspects of life. They should not be frothily frivolous or coldly cynical, any more than they should broadly comic or boisterously funny. They are at lib-

erty to hint at hidden tears, even when they seem to be wreathed in smiles. They have no right to parade mere cleverness; and they must shun all affectation as they must avoid all self-consciousness. They should appear to possess a colloquial carelessness which is ever shrinking from the commonplace, and which has succeeded in concealing every trace of the labor of the literary artist by which alone they have attained their seemingly spontaneous perfection.

“Familiar verse” is, perhaps, somewhat more exact than the term once employed by Mr. Stedman—“patrician rhymes”—which is a designation possibly a little chilly for these airy lyrics. To fall fully within the definition, so the late Frederick Locker-Lampson asserted, a poem must be brief and brilliant; and the late Tom Hood added that it ought also to be buoyant. Brevity, brilliancy, buoyancy—these are qualities we cannot fail to find in the best of Locker-Lampson’s own verses, in Praed’s, in Prior’s—and also in Holmes’s, in Bret Harte’s and in Mr. Stedman’s.

Brevity it must have, first of all; and Locker-Lampson excludes the “Rape of the Lock,” “on account of its length, which renders it much too important,” although it “would otherwise be one of the finest specimens of *vers de société* in any language.” Here it is permissible to echo the opinion of Poe, who held that a poem could scarcely exceed one hundred lines in length under penalty of losing its unity of impression. But, on the other hand, the poem of this species must not be excessively condensed, or else it is not im-

portant enough. A couplet does not give room to turn round in. Gay's

Life is a jest, and all things show it;
I said so once, and now I know it.

and Pope's

I am his Highness's dog at Kew,
Pray, sir, tell me—whose dog are you?

have rather the sharp snap of the epigram than the gentler flow of genuine *vers de société*. And so, certain of the slighter pieces in the Greek anthology, lovely as they are and exquisite, lack the modest amplitude fairly to be expected from a poem which claims admission into this charmed circle.

Brilliant it must be also; and this requirement excludes "Sally in Our Alley," for example, because it is "too homely and too entirely simple and natural," and it keeps out "John Gilpin" as well, because it is too frankly comic in its intent, too boldly funny. But the brilliancy must not be excessive; and the diffused glow of the incandescent lamp is better than the sputtering glare of the arc light. If the brilliancy is attained by too violent and too obvious an effort, the light lyric is likely to harden into artificiality; and this is a danger that even Praed does not always escape. His "Chaunt of the Brazen Head" has a luster that is almost metallic; the sparkle is undeniable, but in time the insistent antithesis reveals itself as mechanical, at least, not to call it either tricky or tiresome.

Buoyancy is the third requisite; and this is not so easy to define as the others. Yet its necessity is plain enough when we note how heavy certain metrical efforts may be, although they achieve brevity and even a superficial brilliance. They lack the final ease and the careless felicity; they are not wholly free from an awkwardness that is not unfairly to be termed lumbering. For example, buoyancy is just what is lacking in the rhyming episode of John Wilson Croker, "To Miss Peel, on her Marriage"—quatrains which Locker-Lampson held in sufficient esteem to include in his carefully chosen "Lyra Elegantiarum," and which Mr. Swin-

burne despondingly dismissed as "twenty villainous lines."

Just as comedy is ever in danger of declining into farce—a mishap that has almost befallen "The Rivals," for example—or else of stiffening into the serious drama—a turning aside that is visible in "Froufrou"—so, in like manner, has familiar verse ever to avoid breadth of humor on the one side and depth of feeling on the other. It must eschew, not merely coarseness or vulgarity, but even free and hearty laughter; and it must refrain from dealing not only with the soul-plumbing abysses of the tragic but even with the ground-swell of any sweeping emotion. It must keep on the crest of the waves, midway between the utter triviality of the murmuring shallows and the silent profundity of the depths that are dumb.

Perhaps this is one reason why so few of these brevet-poems have been the work of the greater wits or of the greater poets; familiar verse is too serious to carry all the fun of the jesters, and too slight to convey the more solemn message of the major bards. Rather has it been the casual recreation of true lyrists not in the front rank, or else it has been the sudden excursion of those not reckoned among the songsters, often men of the world for once achieving in verse a seeming spontaneity, like that which gives zest to delightful conversation.

Perhaps, again, this is a reason why *vers de société* can be found flourishing most luxuriantly when the man of the world is himself most abundant, and when he has helped to set up an ideal of sparkling nimbleness in the give-and-take of social encounter. "When society ceases to be simple, it becomes skeptical," and, when it "becomes refined, it begins to dread the exhibition of strong feeling." So wrote one of the reviewers of Locker-Lampson's collection. "In such an atmosphere, emotion takes refuge in jest, and passion hides itself in skepticism of passion." And the reviewer added that there is a delicious piquancy in the poets who represent this social mood,

and who are put in a class apart by "the way they play bo-peep with their feelings."

In the stately sentences of his time, the elder Disraeli declared that, in the production of *vers de société*, "genius will not always be sufficient to impart that grace of amenity which seems peculiar to those who are accustomed to elegant society. These productions are more the effusions of taste than genius, and it is not sufficient that the poet is inspired by the Muse, he must also suffer his concise page to be polished by the hand of the Graces." Locker-Lampson maintained that "the tone should not be pitched high; it should be idiomatic, and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish, and completeness; for, however trivial the subject-matter may be, indeed rather in proportion to its triviality, subordination to the rules of composition and perfection of execution should be strictly enforced." And Mr. Austin Dobson, drawing up "Twelve Good Rules" for the writer of familiar verse, advised him to be "colloquial but not commonplace," to be as witty as he liked, to be "serious by accident," and to be "pathetic with the greatest discretion."

II

THOSE who may search Greek literature for frequent examples of familiar verse are doomed to disappointment; and even in the lovely lyrics of the "Anthology," so human, so sad, so perfect in precision of phrase, we fail to find the lightness, the playfulness, the gaiety of true *vers de société*. We note brevity nearly always, brilliancy sometimes, and even buoyancy occasionally; we mark a lapidary concision that only Landor, of all the moderns, was ever able to achieve; but we feel that the tone is a little too grave and a little too austere. Perhaps the Greek spirit was too simple and too lofty to stoop

to the pleasantry and prettiness of familiar verse. Perhaps the satiric reaction against excessive romanticism, which sustains so much modern *vers de société*, was not possible before the birth of romance itself. Perhaps, indeed, the banter and the gently satiric playfulness of *vers de société* were not to be expected in a race which, no matter how gifted it might be lyrically, kept woman in social inferiority, and denied her the social privileges that give to modern society its charm and its variety.

At first glance, it would seem as though more than one lyric of Anacreon, at least, and perhaps of Theocritus also, ought to fall well within the most rigid definition of familiar verse. But there is scarcely a single poem of Anacreon's which really approaches the type we are seeking. The world for which he wrote reveals itself as very narrow; and he is found to be devoid of "catholicity of human interest," as Tom Hood asserted. His verses are a little lacking in tenderness of sentiment; and, as Professor Jebb says, Anacreon's "sensuousness is tempered merely by intellectual charm"—and this is not what we require in social verse.

Theocritus, also, exquisite as are his vignettes of Alexandrian life, perfect as they are in tone and feeling, clear cut as an intaglio and delightful as a Tanagra figurine—Theocritus is at once too idyllic and too realistic. His verses are without certain of the characteristics which are imperative in true *vers de société*. They are at once a little too homely and a little too poetic. If a selection from Greek literature were absolutely imperative, probably a copy of verses combining brevity, brilliancy and buoyancy could be found more easily among the scanty lyrics of Agathias or of Antipater than amid the larger store of Theocritus or of Anacreon.

Perhaps it is the more prominent position of woman in Rome which makes a search in Latin literature a more certain pleasure. Yet the world in which Catullus lived, that "tenderest of Ro-

man poets nineteen hundred years ago," while it was externally most luxurious, had an underlying rudeness and an ill-concealed coarseness. And Catullus himself, with all his nimble wit, his scholarly touch, his instinctive certainty of taste, was consumed by too fierce a flame of passion to be satisfied often with the leisurely interweaving of jest and earnest which we look for in the songster of society. Infrequently does he allow himself the courtly grace of true familiar verse—in his "Dedication for a Volume of Lyrics," in his "Invitation to Dinner" and in his "Morning Call," so sympathetically paraphrased by Landor.

Half a generation later, we come to Horace, a perfect master of the lighter lyric. He has the wide knowledge of a man of the world and the consummate ease of an accomplished craftsman in verse. He can achieve both the "curious felicity" and the "art that hides itself." And his tone, so Walter Bagehot insisted, "is that of prime ministers; the easy philosophy is that of courts and parliaments. . . . He is but the extreme and perfect type of a whole class of writers, some of whom exist in every literary age, and who give expression to what we may call the poetry of equanimity—that is, the world's view of itself, its self-satisfaction, its conviction that you must hear what comes, not hope for much, think *some* evil, never be excited, admire little, and then you will be at peace." Perhaps this view of Horace's philosophy is a little too disenchanting; but Bagehot here suggested why Horace was likely to be one of the masters of familiar verse; and it is the Roman poet's catholicity of human interest, even more than his exquisite naturalness, which makes his lines sometimes so startlingly modern. It was easy for Thackeray to find London equivalents for the Latin "*Persicos odi*," and for Molière earlier, and Mr. Austin Dobson later, to imitate "*Donec gratus*." But there is little need to cite further, for no poet has tempted more adapters and translators—not always, indeed, to his profit, and often, in fact,

to their undoing, since it is only by an inspiration as happy as the original that any modern may hope to equal the sureness of stroke characteristic of a poet who shunned the remote adjective, and who was ever content with the vocabulary of every day.

It is not pleasant to pass down from the benign rule of Augustus to the tyranny of Nero, and to contrast the constant manliness of Horace with the servility of Martial, a servility finding relief now and again in the utmost bitterness of unrestrained invective. Horace, with all his equanimity, was never indifferent to ideas—and he had an ethical code of his own; but Martial rarely revealed even a hint of moral feeling. He was cynical of necessity; and therefore is he habitually too hard and too rasping to attain the geniality which belongs to the better sort of social verse. Few of his poems are really long enough to be styled lyrics; and the vast majority are merely epigrams, with the wilful condensation and the arbitrary pointedness that have been the bane of the epigram ever since Martial set the bad example. But even though the Latin poet, as Professor Mackail asserts, made his strongest appeal "to all that was worst in Roman taste—its heavy-handedness, its admiration of verbal cleverness, its tendency toward brutality"—still, now and again it is possible to pick out a poem that falls fairly within the definition of familiar verse. There is, for example:

IN HABENTEM AMENAS AEDES

Your parks are unsurpassed in noble trees;
A finer bath than yours one seldom sees;
Grand is your colonnade, and all complete
The stone mosaic underneath your feet;
Your steeds are fine; your hunting grounds
are wide,
And gleaming fountains spout on every side;
Your drawing-rooms are grand; there's nothing cheap
Except the places where you eat and sleep!
With all the space and splendor you have got,
Oh, what a charming mansion you have *not!*

III

WHEN at last we pass over the long suspension-bridge that arches the dark

gulf between the ancient world and the modern, we discover that the more direct inheritors of the Latin tradition, the Italians and the Spaniards, have neither of them contributed abundantly to this special department of lyric poetry. It may be that the Spanish language is too grandiloquent and too sonorous to be readily playful; and perhaps the Spanish character itself is either too loftily dignified or too realistically shrewd to be able often to achieve that harmonious blending of the grave and the gay which is essential in familiar verse. It is true that Lope de Vega, early master of every form of the drama and bold adventurer into every other realm of literature, has left us a few poems that might demand inclusion; and among them is an ingenious sonnet on the difficulty of making a sonnet—which was cleverly Englished by the late H. C. Bunner, and which may have suggested to Voiture his more famous rondeau. No doubt, there are a few other Spanish poets who might be enlisted as contributors to an international anthology of *vers de société*; but the fact remains that the Spanish section of any such collection would be slighter even than the Italian.

And the Italian contribution would not be very important, in spite of the national facility in improvisation—or perhaps because of this dangerous gift. In the earlier Italian Renaissance, existence seems to have been almost too strenuous for social verse. As we call the roll of the Italian poets, we may note the name of more than one master of the passionate lyric and of the scorching satire, but we find scarcely any writer who has left us verses of the requisite brevity, brilliancy and buoyancy. In Rossetti's "Dante and his Circle" there is more than one poem that seems to have this triple qualification, although, on more careful examination, the sentiment is seen to be too sincere and too frankly expressed, or else the tone is too rarely playful to warrant any liberal selection from these fascinating pages. Perhaps even from this volume a more lively little piece might, here and there, be bor-

rowed, such as Sachetti's "On a Wet Day," for instance. A little later there is Berni, whose metrical portrait of himself might fairly be compared—and not altogether to its disadvantage—with one or another of Praed's caressingly tender sketches of character. The Italians have no lack of biting epigram and of pertinent pasquinade; and they excel in broad burlesque and in laughable parody. But the mock-heroic, however clever it may be, is not the same as *vers de société*. And even in the nineteenth century, where there was a firmer social solidarity, the only name which forces itself on our attention is that of Giusti—whose idiomatic ballads have not unfairly been likened to the songs of Béranger.

The more northern languages are less likely to reward research, partly because of the prolonged rudeness of the Teutonic tongues and partly because of the more rigid seriousness of the folk that speak them. There is a true lyric grace in the songs of the Minnesingers, despite their frequent artificiality; but they again are too direct and too purely lyric. However ingenious they may be, they are without the wit and the humor which we look for in familiar verse. Even the later and far greater Goethe, who, for all his Olympian serenity, revealed at times the possession of that specific levity which is a prerequisite for the songster of society—even Goethe chose to condense his wit into the distichs of his "Xenien" rather than to commingle it with his balladry. He himself thought it strange that, with all he had done, there was no one of his poems "that would suit the Lutheran hymn-book;" and it is perhaps even stranger that scarcely any one of them would suit such an anthology as has been here suggested. Perhaps a claim might be made for his "Ergo Bibamus," which has almost briskness enough to warrant its acceptance.

From Heine, of course, a choice would be less difficult; and at least one of his lyrics, the "Grammar of the Stars," seems to meet all the requirements of familiar verse. But, af-

fluent as Heine is in sentiment, and master as he is of both girding satire and airy persiflage, there is ever a heart-break to be heard in his verses—an unforgettable sob. The chords of his lyre are really too deep and too resonant for him to chant trifles. The "brave soldier in the war of liberation of humanity," as he styled himself, even in his paraded mockery and in his irrepressible wit, was really too much in earnest to happen often on the happy mean which makes familiar verse a possibility.

IV

In the French language at last the seeker after *vers de société* finds not only the name, but the thing itself, the real thing; and he finds it in abundance and of the best quality. Some part of this abundance is due, no doubt, to the French tongue itself, for, as a shrewd writer has reminded us, "a language long employed by a delicate and critical society is a treasury of dexterous felicities;" it may not be what Emerson finely called "fossil poetry," but it is "crystallized *esprit*." Society verse might be expected to flourish most luxuriantly among a people governed by the social instinct, as the French are, and as appreciative of the social qualities. The French invented the *salon*, which is the true hothouse for familiar verse; and they have raised correspondence and conversation also to the dignity of a fine art. As we scan the history of the past three centuries, we note that in France, society and literature have met on terms that approach equality far more nearly than in any other country. The French men of letters have frequently been men of the world, even if the French men of the world have been men of letters not quite so often as the English.

Moreover, it is in prose rather than in poetry that the French have achieved their amplest triumphs. To us of the Teutonic tradition, French poetry seems to be wanting in imaginative suggestiveness; it is too clear

and too precise and too logical; it fails to attain the Miltonic ideal of simplicity, sensuousness and passion. But, whatever the reservations an English reader must make in his praise of French poetry, he need make none in his eulogy of French prose. In prose the French have commonly a perfection to which the English language can pretend only too rarely. Their prose has order and balance and harmony; it flows limpidly with a charming transparency; it is ever lucid, ever flexible, ever various; it has at once an obvious polish and an apparent ease. And to these precious qualifications for a form of poetry seemingly so unambitious as social verse must be added the possession not only of the wit and the vivacity which are acknowledged characteristics of the French, but also their ownership of something far more needful—the gift of comedy.

"For many years the French have not been more celebrated for memoirs which professedly describe a real society than they have been for the light social song which embodies its sentiments and pours forth its spirit," said Walter Bagehot, writing in the middle of the nineteenth century. He maintained that the French mind had a genius for the poetry of society, partly because it was "unable to remove itself into the higher region of imagined forms," and, therefore, it had "the quickest insight into the exact relation of surrounding superficial phenomena." He held that the spirit of these lighter lyrics is ever half mirthful, and that they cannot produce a profound impression. "A gentle pleasure, half sympathy, half amusement, is that at which they aim," he suggested, adding that "they do not please us equally in all moods of mind; sometimes they seem nothing and nonsense—like society itself."

Perhaps it is in consequence of the prosaic element perceptible in much of their more pretentious poetry that the French themselves have not considered curiously their own familiar verse. While there are at least half-a-dozen collections of the *vers de société*

of the English language, a diligent seeking has failed to find a single similar anthology in French. A book of *ballades* there is, but the most of these are serious in tone rather than serio-comic; and the brightest of the many epigrammatic quatrains of the language have been gathered into an engaging little volume. But a selection of the best of their lighter lyrics, having brevity, brilliancy and buoyancy, has not yet been undertaken by any French critic, although he would have only the embarrassment of choosing from out a superabundance of enticing examples.

For the most part, the vigorous verse of Villon, that warm "voice from the slums of Paris," has too poignant a melancholy to be included, for all its bravado gaiety; and, though he tries to carry it off with a laugh, the disreputable poet fails to disguise the depth of his feeling. And yet it would be impossible to exclude the famous "Ballade of Old-Time Ladies," with its unforgettable refrain, "Where are the snows of yester-year?" A larger selection would be easier from Villon's contemporary, Charles of Orleans, long time a prisoner in England—a poet far less energetic and not so disenchanting, but possessing by birth "the manners and tone of good society." Stevenson praised his *rondeaux* especially for their "inimitable lightness and delicacy of touch," and declared that the royal lyrist's "lines go with a lilt and sing themselves to music of their own."

The *rondel* was the fixed form in which Charles of Orleans was most often successful, although he frequently attempted the *ballade* also. This larger form the later Clément Marot managed with assured mastery. One of the best known of his more playful poems is the *ballade à double refrain*, setting forth the duplicity of "Brother Lubin"—a poem which has been rendered into English both by Bryant and Longfellow, although neither of them held himself bound by the strict letter of the law that prescribes the limitation and the ordering of the rhymes properly to be expected in the *ballade*.

As it happens, the American poets were not happily inspired in rendering this characteristic specimen of Marot's discreet rillery and metrical agility; and in their versions we fail to find the limpid lines and the polished irony of the French poet, who was able so easily to marry the elegant with the natural—qualities rarely conjoined, even in French. And yet Locker-Lampson was able to paraphrase one of Clément Marot's lesser lyrics, "Du Rys de Madame d'Allebert," with indisputable felicity:

How fair those locks which now the light
wind stirs,

What eyes she has, and what a perfect
arm!

And yet methinks that little laugh of hers—
That little laugh is still her crowning
charm.

Where'er she passes, country-side or town,
The streets make festa, and the fields re-
joice.

Should sorrow come, as 'twill, to cast me
down

Or death, as come he must, to hush my
voice,

Her laugh would wake me, just as now it
thrills me

That little giddy laugh wherewith she
kills me.

Space fails here to select samples of familiar verse from the poems of Ronsard and Du Bellay and Desportes, or to excerpt cautiously from the later poetasters who were forever rhyming in the *ruelles* of the *Précieuses*, and who clubbed together to go on record in the celebrated "Guirlande à Julie." But Corneille and Molière and La Fontaine cannot be treated in this cavalier fashion. Taine calls La Fontaine's epistles to Madame de Sablière "little masterpieces of respectful gallantry and delicate tenderness." It is this same note of tender gallantry which strikes us in the poems which Molière and Corneille severally addressed to the handsome and alluring actress, Mademoiselle Du Parc. Corneille's stanzas are almost too elevated in tone to permit them to be termed familiar verse; and yet where they are read in the English rendering of Locker-Lampson they do not transcend the modest boundaries of this minor department of poetry.

In the eighteenth century, we come to Dufresny, with his "Morrows," a little comedy in four quatrains; to Piron, rather more inclined to the pert and pungent epigram than to the more suave and gracious song of society; and to Voltaire, the arch-wit of the age, accomplished in social verse as in every other conceivable form of literary endeavor. Perhaps it was of Voltaire that Lowell was thinking when he asserted that in French poetry only "the high polish kept out the decay." Yet it was Lowell himself who rendered into flowing English an epistle of Voltaire's to Madame Du Châtelet—stanzas in which the aging wit refers to his years, not so touchingly as Corneille had done, it is true, but with dignity, none the less.

In the nineteenth century, it is possible to perceive two diverging tendencies in French *vers de société*, one of them being rather more obviously literary in its manner, and including certain of the more piquant lyrics of Hugo, Musset and Gautier, while the other is somewhat humble in its aim and seemingly simpler in its execution. To this second group belong the best of Béranger's ballads, of Gustave Nadaud's, and of Henry Mürger's. Of Nadaud the one perfect example is "Carcassonne," so perfectly Englished by John R. Thompson; and of Mürger probably the most characteristic—in its presentation of the actual atmosphere of that bohemia which is truly a desert country by the sea—is the lyric of "Old Loves," sympathetically translated by Mr. Andrew Lang:

OLD LOVES

Louise, have you forgotten yet
The corner of the flowery land,
The ancient garden where we met,
My hand that trembled in your hand?
Our lips found words scarce sweet enough,
As low beneath the willow-trees
We sat; have you forgotten, love?
Do you remember, love Louise?

Marie, have you forgotten yet
The loving barter that we made?
The rings we changed, the suns that set,
The woods fulfilled with sun and shade?
The fountains that were musical
By many an ancient trysting tree—
Marie, have you forgotten all?
Do you remember, love Marie?

Christine, do you remember yet

Your room with scents and roses gay?
My garret—near the sky 'twas set—
The April hours, the nights of May?
The clear, calm nights—the stars above
That whispered they were fairest seen
Through no cloud-veil? Remember, love!
Do you remember, love Christine?

Louise is dead, and, well-a-day!
Marie a sadder path has ta'en;
And pale Christine has passed away
In Southern suns to bloom again.
Alas! for one and all of us—
Marie, Louise, Christine forget;
Our bower of love is ruinous,
And I alone remember yet.

Béranger is like Horace in that he is wholly free from cynicism, and in that he is essentially genial. The French balladist is like the Latin lyrist again in that he has tempted countless English translators—mostly to their own undoing. At first glance, it may appear that poetry so easy to read as Horace's or Béranger's, so direct, so unaffected, ought to be transferable into another tongue without great difficulty. But this appearance is altogether deceptive, and those who carelessly venture upon translation soon discover that all unwillingly they have been paying the highest compliment to the skill with which the metrical artists have succeeded in concealing their consummate craftsmanship. Even Thackeray, with all his cleverness, with all his understanding of Parisian life, did not achieve the impossible feat of making a wholly satisfactory English translation of a song of Béranger's, although he twice attempted the "Roi d'Yvetot," and, although he did not fail to bring over into English not a little of the sentiment and of the sparkle of the "Grenier." Indeed, it is this ballad of Béranger's which satisfies the definition of familiar verse more completely, perhaps, than any other piece of the Epicurean songster's.

A true lyric, whether ballad or sonnet or elegy, is not addressed to the eye alone; it is ever intended to be said or sung. The songs of Béranger are real songs fitted to a tune already running in the head of the lyrist; and they have, in fact, sung themselves into being. The poems of Hugo and Gautier and Musset, even when they are most

lyrical, are rather for recitation or reading aloud; they are not intended for the actual accompaniment of music. Once, indeed, Musset gave us a lyric, which is not only singable, but which seems to insist on an alliance with music. This single song is the "Mimi Pinson," with its exquisite commingling of wit and melancholy. For the most part, the stanzas of Musset are too full of fire and ardor to be classed as familiar verse; they have too resonant a note of passion; and despite their brilliance they are of a truth too sad.

It is only occasionally, also, that a poem of Hugo's falls within the scope of this inquiry. His was too large an utterance for mere social verse; and the melody of his varied rhythms is too vibrating. His legends are epic in their breadth; and he lacks the unlit-erary simplicity and the vernacular terseness of familiar verse. For all his genius, he is deficient not only in wit and in humor, but even in the sense of humor; and there is some truth in Heine's joke that Victor Hugo's "muse had two left hands." And yet, if a selection from the greatest French poet of the nineteenth century is imperative, it is not impossible to pick out a few of his lyrics which have the needful airiness and grace and charm. To one of these, translated by Miss Ethel Grey, she gave the rather commonplace title, "My Pretty Neighbor."

If you've nothing, dear, to tell me,
Why, each morning passing by,
With your sudden smiles compel me,
To adore you, then repel me,
Pretty little neighbor, why?
Why, if you have naught to tell me,
Do you so my patience try?

If you've nothing, sweet, to teach me,
Tell me why you press my hand?
I'll attend if you'll impeach me
Of my sins, or even preach me
Sermons hard to understand:
But, if you have naught to teach me,
Dear, your meaning I demand!

If you wish me, love, to leave you,
Why for ever walk my way?
Then, when gladly I receive you,
Wherefore do I seem to grieve you?
Must I then, in truth, believe you
Wish me, darling, far away?
Do you wish me, love, to leave you?
Pretty little neighbor, say!

Aug. 1903

From the treasury of "Enamels and Cameos" there is only the embarrassment of choosing, as no French poet has written poems more translucent and colloquially easy than Théophile Gautier. His is the clear serenity of temper and the unfailing certainty of stroke which reveal the master of social verse. But the French poet's invincible dexterity is the despair of the translator. How render into another language the firmly chiseled stanzas of a lyrist who was enamoured of the vocabulary, and who was ever wooing it ardently and successfully? As Mr. Henry James says, Gautier "loved words for themselves—for their look, their aroma, their color, their fantastic intimations." Locker-Lampson accomplished the almost impossible feat of finding English equivalents for Gautier's French—in the first two quatrains of "A Winter Fantasy"—but even he thought it best to end his own poem in his own way. Mr. Austin Dobson's "Ars Victrix," triumphant as it is in the transfusion of the spirit of Gautier's deepest lyric, is rather a paraphrase than a translation. And perhaps this poem, with all its ease and lightness, is a little too stately and too majestic for true familiar verse:

All passes. Art alone
Enduring stays to us;
The bust outlasts the throne—
The coin, Tiberius.

Of one of Gautier's less fortunate contemporaries, Felix d'Arvers, nothing survives save a single sonnet, perhaps imbued with too puissant a melancholy to be admitted without challenge amid poems brief and brilliant and buoyant; but Longfellow's translation, although not quite so perfect as some of his renderings of Uhland, is so excellent that it pleads for the inclusion of the solitary poem by which alone its author's name is withheld from oblivion.

Another fellow-lyrist of Gautier's, whose fate was sadder even than that of d'Arvers, was Gérard de Nerval, one of whose lyrics has had the good fortune to tempt Mr. Andrew Lang to turn it into English:

THE SMART SET

AN OLD TUNE

There is an air for which I would disown
Mozart's, Rossini's, Weber's melodies—
A sweet, sad air that languishes and sighs,
And keeps its secret charm for me alone.

Whene'er I hear that music vague and old,
Two hundred years are mist that rolls
away;
The thirteenth Louis reigns, and I behold
A green land golden in the dying day.

An old, red castle, strong with stony towers,
The windows gay with many-colored glass;
Wide plains, and rivers flowing among
flowers,
That bathe the castle basement as they
pass.

In antique weed, with dark eyes and gold
hair,
A lady looks forth from her window high;
It may be that I knew and found her fair
In some forgotten life, long time gone by.



ERE COMES THE NIGHT

AH, pain that a rose should die,
That a lily's grace should fail;
That dark should dim a sunset sky,
And a rainbow's glory pale—
And lovers say good-bye!

Alas, that Youth is fleet—
Swifter than Age is swift—
That dearest hopes have winged feet,
And Love's a transient gift,
As shadowy as sweet.

So kiss we while we may,
While lips are still afire.
For all too surely creeps a day
When fades the dear desire
To ashes cold and gray.

Too surely comes the night
When the star of Love shall set,
And the bitter snow of Time lie white,
And the soul would best forget
The old, beloved delight.

NANNIE BYRD TURNER.



THE NEW DISEASE

ETHEL—Have you noticed how melancholy George looks when he rides?
LUCILLE—Yes; he is getting automobilious.



BUT for lace and lingerie woman would have little temptation to be vain—
and man little temptation.

"THE VOICES"

By G. B. Burgin

MADGE ENDICOTT sighed as she looked thoughtfully out at the fusillading raindrops. For the first time in her life, she did not want to act. Her usual practice was to concentrate herself on her part at least half-an-hour before starting for "The Thespian." Then, she went to her carriage as in a dream, her maid kept away all intruders from her dressing-room, and she lived and was the heroine of the play until, at the end of it, her own identity returned to her. The clamor of the audience drove away the memory of the part she had played, and she found herself bowing to a sea of dim faces in the theatre, wondering what she had done to evoke their enthusiasm. Sometimes, as she bowed, she thought of that woman who faded away from the stage until the next evening. Did she go to some phantom realm of her own and live her life, or simply dissolve into thin air?

Madge Endicott was a dreamer. When a half-fledged girl, living alone with her grim old studious father, he had brought back with him one night a youth, glorious as Apollo. Somehow, she had conquered his shyness—and her own; their spirits leaped together; they roamed the ancient woods and flowery glades of Eversleigh until one day the lad came to tell her that he must go back to London.

"London!" she queried, aghast. "What is—London?"

"London!" he said. "London! Have you never heard the Voices of London? It is a city where men move and have their being—a city to which they are unwilling slaves; for

the thralldom wherewith it binds them is rarely, if ever, broken even by death itself. There is something in its very atmosphere which sets its seal upon men and women and marks them for its own. By night and day, the great city is never still—its Voices are never silent. Half of its inhabitants sleep while the other half work. From all quarters of the universe, people come to listen to the Voices. Old men and women, youths and maidens, children with clear, innocent eyes; and the great city takes them all to its breast, in Winter folding them beneath its smoky pall, in Summer spreading over them a mantle of blue sky. But once within its meshes, there is no escape from the mark it sets upon its victims."

"No escape?"

"No; they are magnetized, fascinated. And when they have dwelt there, for a little while, it may be, they are carried away from London's stony arms—that London which has sucked their life-blood—that London which has drained them of youth and hope and joy—into some quiet place where the great city's unrest breaks faintly from afar upon dead ears and irks them not. Men, still treading the glad earth, still loving and living, toiling, striving, sorrowing, see the black hearses go by—see the sable horses curbed and reined and flecked with foam—see shambling mutes, those hireling sycophants of woe—and march onward, knowing full well that they, too, one day, will be carried away from the Voices to the green churchyard, with its waving grasses and flower-decked graves, behind these

same somber steeds of Death. Yet, knowing this, they plod on, dusty, footsore, travel-stained, to the great city."

"But," she said, thoughtfully, "God's voice is clearer than the Voice of the Great City. Why not stay and listen to it here?"

He shook his head. "I should die here. London is the Giver of Fame, and I would be famous ere I die. It is the centre of the universe, the realm of thought, the kingdom of all knowledge, all science, everything that makes life worth living. Those who enter it must fight a hard fight or perish. The modern Mirza stands upon a hill and sees those burdened pilgrims who hearken to the Voices, toiling onward with outstretched hands—sees them swallowed up beneath the glaring sun, the quiet Summer stars, the Winter gloom, the dusty, roaring winds of March—sees them play their tiny parts upon life's stage—sees them struggle and falter and disappear—sees them win fame, sit at meat in high places, their names in the mouths of all men. I must fare forth and take my chance of good or ill with the others. The Voices call me; I must go."

The girl caught his enthusiasm. "Ah, yes, I understand now. I understand. If the Voices speak, one must heed. Once you have heard them calling, there is no rest, no peace. Sometimes, I seem to hear them myself in the sighing of the pines, a whisper in the grasses. Yes, Dick, dear, you must go, you must go. But what of those who perish in the strife?"

"Some must perish," he said, sadly, "some must perish. With the morrow's dawn fresh puppets take the place of those of yesterday, only to give place to others in their turn. The poor little parts are played, hearts broken or healed, wrongs redressed—sometimes; hatred and revenge let loose to do their work; yet still the great city endures. 'Hearken,' the Voices cry, 'hearken, O ye peoples of the earth. Come one, come all.

Here is the stage on which ye strut and strive, starve, die, or revel and laugh long. Come, but pay the price, pay the price!' I must go—and pay the price."

"Yes," the girl said, "if one goes, one must pay the price."

She looked wistfully round her at the waving fields of corn, the green hedgerows, the tasseled plumes of the larches. "Yes," she repeated, with a little sigh, "if we go we must pay the price; but all these have breathed into us; they have given us something to—come back to."

When the day of parting came, the lad bent down to kiss her sweet, grave lips, but he had never come back. She, too, had heard the Voices of the great city. She had striven and suffered and fought her way up to the top; but the old name by which the lad had known her was hers no more. She kept that for the time when London's Voices no longer called, and she could go back to the green hedgerows, the waving corn, the plumed larches nodding in the west wind. If she could not see him again, she would never go back. Without him, life was nothing. Only, sometimes, she heard his name. He also was hearkening to the Voices of London's Heart—was great—beloved by the people—a famous playwright; and some day, if the Voices willed, they must meet, their hearts be filled with joy.

To-night, as the raindrops rolled down the window, she asked herself when would God feed this starved, empty heart of hers—that heart which gave forth so much to London with so little return. Would the Voices bring him to her? She was actually playing in one of his dramas at "The Thespian." But he had been away from the Voices for two years. In two years she had become famous, the "leading lady" of "The Thespian." She was cast for the great part in his new drama, which was to be put in rehearsal on the morrow. Would he know her again—the girl who had led him to the cornfields, had shown him the blossoms on the

larches, the mosses in the fairy dells? Once, he had made her stand beside a magnificent marble copy of the Venus de Milo in her father's study. "Some day," he had declared, with conviction, "some day, when you are grown to complete womanhood, you will be like that—the same calm brows, the same deep eyes. You will become a modern Venus, and we shall all worship at your shrine."

And she had driven away the worshippers from the shrine—all save the one who did not come. Her heart hungered for him, she prayed God for him, she saw him every hour; and yet it had all happened five years ago. Five years without a word, a sign, a token that he remembered the shadows of the pines, the upland breezes, the long, level stretches of land over which they had wandered together, the joyous days, the roses of their lost youth.

And suddenly, as she stood there, she opened the window. The Voice of London came to her; the west wind blew two raindrops on her eyes. "My children! my children!" said the Voice, "I spare you—spare you for one another."

"Your carriage, madame," said her maid; and Madge Endicott awoke from her dream.

II

In a gloomy London street, leading down to the Thames Embankment from the Strand, is an equally gloomy-looking house—gloomy, that is, externally. Within, it is decked in harmony with the varying and evanescent moods of that marvelously many-sided being, Dick Sutherland—poet, artist, playwright.

On this particularly somber evening, Sutherland sat in a room at the top of his house, where double windows shut out the sound of the passing traffic. The windows were still further hedged about with Cairene lattice work and loosely flowing curtains. In his leisure moments, Sutherland had amused himself by painting the ceiling with alle-

gorical groups of the months taken from Morris's "Earthly Paradise." Radiant-hued Smyrna rugs were scattered over the oak floor, the bookcases which covered the walls were filled with volumes of all kinds. At the end of the room, stood its only other ornament, the exquisite, life-sized marble Venus de Milo, which Sutherland one day recognized in a Wardour-street shop, and bought as a memorial of the serious, half-fledged girl who, unconsciously, had taught him how to become great.

Sutherland was still scrawling busily. Presently, he wrote "The End," with an air of relief, got up, stretched himself, threw down his pen. "Ten o'clock," he said, as the clock of St. Clements Danes struck. "There's the end of a year's work; and I'd give the whole of it, all I have in the world, just to see that child's face again, just to hear her voice, look into her grave, sweet eyes. She comes between me and all other women, and yet I can't trace her. The father died; they were poor; London swallowed her up. That's all. I taught her to listen to London's Voices, and London has robbed me of her. My God, but it's hard—damned hard! The one thing I want in the world to make me happy—the one thing for which I would sweep a crossing and give up everything—is denied me. Poor little maid! Poor little maid! And I would have worshipped her. I suppose it was not to be!

"Days that are lost lamenting o'er lost days."

Shall I go on mourning her loss forever?"

He stopped before the fireplace, and stretched himself with a yawn. Then, he walked up to the Venus and looked at it wistfully, steadfastly, as the firelight played upon its beautiful limbs. He had fallen into the habit of talking to it as if it were alive.

"Seems rather a waste of time to leave you for the pearl-powdery smiles of the unknown Endicott," he said. "If she were only like you, she could do anything with her part. Urquhart assures me that she can do anything;

that she holds her audience from start to finish. Ah, well! she would be a change from your marble immobility, though she would do well to copy it in some parts of the play. But I don't care to be bothered with the woman. She'll never understand how I want the part played. Like Heine, on the last day of his out-door life, I could fall, smitten and helpless, at your feet, fancy you gazing at me with pity and yearning because I'm such a poor, unhappy devil, and hear the words spoken only for my ear, 'Dost thou not see that I have no arms, and, therefore, cannot help thee?'"

He lighted a cigarette, and called himself an idiot, as an excuse for the restless spirit which had taken possession of him.

"She told me," he resumed, "to listen to the Voices, and to follow where they led. The trouble is, that they haven't led me to her. Life doesn't satisfy me without her." He let his cigarette go out. "You know it doesn't. As a matter of fact, my dear marble woman, you are chiefly to blame for my dissatisfaction. How can I contemplate your ideal perfection and then expect to meet with it in real life! I've met with it only once—in the face of that child who grew up beside you, with features exactly like your own. But I lost sight of her. 'Seek her not,' said the Voices; and, like a fool, I listened to them. Perhaps it's as well. Better to love in vain than to attain your heart's desire and—cease to desire it. Man's nature, at its purest and best, is so imperfect that it degrades, in some measure, the sacredness of woman's—her awful purity. 'Male hogs in armor,' Kingsley calls us. Well, he isn't far wrong; but yet—

"If swine we be—if we indeed be swine,
Daughter of Persé, make us swine indeed;
But, O unmerciful! O pitiless!
Leave us not thus with sick men's hearts to
bleed!—
To waste long years in yearning, dumb
distress."

Sutherland stopped short, lighted another cigarette, and looked at his own face reflected in an ancient mirror

—looked at the bitter lips, the dark eyes glowing with gloomy fire, the straight nose and patrician features. "Faugh! Room's like an oven." He opened the window, then turned to the Venus. "Listen to those lying Voices—Voices which have made us waste our lives in pursuit of shadows when we might have been happy in the green fields. Listen to the infernal, ceaseless din—that din which drowns the voice of God and leads His sheep astray. If I weren't a Christian, I'd cut my throat and end it. Ah-h! What's that? What's that?"

He listened attentively, his face glowing with eager hope. "The Voices! the Voices! Ah! They're gone, gone! Nothing tangible, nothing real. Gone! Always the same old story. For the moment, I almost seemed to hear them say that we should meet again. I have a presentiment that we shall. But there's no truth in presentiments. People never remember them until after something has happened or ought to have happened and didn't. What if, after all, we were to meet again—soon—soon? Soon!"

He shut the window, picked up the last act of the new play and thrust it carelessly into the pocket of his smoking-jacket. "Good night," he said to the goddess. "I'm just going to look in at 'The Thespian' for a chat with Urquhart. He's in raptures over the first act—has been through it with Miss Endicott—says she'll be 'great' in it. Ah! If he'd seen as many new stars as I have, he'd know how brief their flight generally is!"

As he went on, he waved his hand to the goddess. To his overwrought imagination the perfect lips seemed to smile back at him. Then, the firelight flickered down, and her face was lost in the shadows.

Once in the Strand, Sutherland had but a few steps to go, and, knocking at the private door of "The Thespian," he was shown into the manager's room.

The commissionaire who guarded the private entrance told Sutherland that the performance was not yet over. Presently, he came back with a hurried note

from Urquhart. "Delighted you've looked in, old man. Stay and sup with me. I want to introduce you to Miss Endicott. I'll be round in half an hour."

Sutherland pitched the note into the fire, and, selecting a cozy arm-chair, threw his manuscript down on the table. It uncurred on the last page. In a few minutes, the warmth had its usual effect on any one coming out of the fresh air, and he fell asleep. He was tired, worried; the mental excitement of finishing his play had left him prostrate. His slumbers were so sound that he did not even hear the door open.

Madge Endicott entered the room, and halted by the table. There was a weary look in her eyes; she gazed impatiently round, as if longing to escape. Nothing had come of her presentiment, and she was full of grief. "I'm tired—tired of it all," she murmured. "After playing such a part I can't become modern again in a hurry. What an artist Dick is"—she always thought of Sutherland as if he were still a boy—"in word forms! They are so delicately simple and pure, they bring the tears to my eyes. I have to live in the part, not act it. It isn't acting. My own heart speaks the while."

She wrote a few words to Urquhart on her tablets, and turned to leave the room. Line for line and curve for curve she was a goddess.

Sutherland, half-hidden in the depths of the chair, stirred slightly, and Madge Endicott turned toward him with a little cry of alarm. "At last! at last! The Voices have spoken truly at last!"

Her eyes swam in radiant light; she pressed her hand to her heart to still its hurried beating. Sutherland again stirred, as if conscious of her presence. She advanced a step or two toward him.

Sutherland began to talk in his sleep—an old trick of his which always afflicted him after any mental strain. "Poor child! poor child! Queen of the solitude and silence, dawning into womanhood as a flower opens to the sun. Poor child! poor child!"

She fell on her knees beside him.

"We wandered—wandered—always together—always together. And now she's gone. Poor child! poor child!"

She smiled down upon the tired face, with its sensitive mouth and thin features. "The child went," she murmured. "Yes, Dick, the child went—went with a cruel pain in her heart—went into the world to find it a wilderness. But she grew to womanhood, and studied your plays and worked and worked and worked, hoping, praying, that she might one day meet you again face to face—when you would see in the woman the half-grown girl you praised in the old days. London's Voices led her forth into the hard, cruel world of the stage. As the years went by, she toiled and toiled and toiled, daunted by many failures, but always a little nearer—a little nearer—to success, knowing, by the light of love within her, she must one day surely conquer."

She bent over Sutherland with parted lips, as if to take him to her heart after all the hungry years of waiting and yearning, of probation and trial. As she did so, her eyes fell upon the last page of the drama upon the table:

"But do thou, Phillis, weary not the gods; What has been, even gods can ne'er restore,
And so—the darkness!"

"And so—the darkness," she said. "Dick! Dick! is it your own heart speaking? Are you so unhappy? If I were to marry you, knowing that you would love me only because I recalled your youth before you had lost your ideals, would your love fade away into cold neglect, your poet-wings be clogged to earth. Ah, me! Ah, me! There is a law of change which even Love cannot alter. And yet, the misery of it! Out of his own mouth, he has decided for us both. I will go back to the green fields, the waving corn, and heed the Voices no more."

She neared the door. "But his play, his play! Urquhart says that no one else could act such a part."

Her long, lingering glance drew Sutherland back from the land of dreams. He sprang up and gazed

round in bewilderment. "That you, Urqu——?"

"N-no."

"W-where am I? I—! Oh, I beg your pardon. I was asleep. I—I hope I didn't frighten you? Please forgive me. You must be——"

He trembled violently as she slowly approached him—

"With her two white hands extended as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication gazing earnest
in his face."

The truth dawned upon him, and he strode toward her. "Child! Child! You have come to me at last!"

"Yes, I have come to you at last. The Voices led me."

He gazed incredulously. "Do you come as woman, or marble wakened to life from out the past?"

Her smile was very sweet as she put her hands upon his shoulders. "Yes, I have come from out the past; but do you not see that I have arms to help you?"



IN THE SOUL OF SUMMERTIME

IN the soul of Summertime,
When to rapture, when to rhyme,
Beats each bough and bole and blade,
On the upland, in the glade,
Then I have no thought but one
Under the benignant sun—
Only, sweetheart mine, to fare
Out into the dim somewhere,
Thou for comrade, till afar
Love shall light the vesper-star,
And the plaintive whippoorwill
Home shall call us from the hill.

There'll be iris for thine eyes,
Wherein I see paradise;
Poppies for thy lips will show
Where the golden wheat-waves glow;
And, to match thy hair, there'll be
Depths of woodland shadowry.
And thy smile—but, nay, no more
Delving after metaphor;
For, when in thy radiant mood,
Thou dost shame similitude!
Sight and sound and scent shall be
Perfected for thee and me,
When to rapture, when to rhyme,
Throbs the soul of Summertime!

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



A MAN is never so sure of anything as of something which isn't so.

THE BROTHERS

By Elia W. Peattie

THE high-school exercises were over. Twenty-eight young persons held beribboned diplomas in their hands, and moved self-consciously in their friendly world, where they held a pivotal place.

At dinner that night, Richard Marvin, addressing one of these pivots—his son David—said, with unwonted amiability:

"And what next?"

Mrs. Marvin, who had worn her new foulard to the graduating exercises, and who was looking very handsome, and knew it, also assumed a benevolently parental air.

"Yes, David," she said, "what would you like to be?"

Dick, David's younger brother, prepared to be disdainful, whatever the answer should be. But David had for once forgotten his shyness, which was wont to hang upon him heavily.

"I should like to be a judge," he said.

The remark sounded, in the circumstances, foolish enough. It was, in fact, what the family might have expected of David. Dick was quite ready with his contemptuous giggle; Mrs. Marvin looked annoyed, and Richard Marvin, actually embarrassed.

Nothing except the fact that David, stupid as he was, had actually done well at commencement, and that this day was known to be regarded by him as an occasion of extraordinary importance, kept Mr. Marvin from calling his son—what he truly considered him to be—a fool.

Some shred of dignity was saved to the situation by Mr. Marvin's next remark.

"If you really have a taste for the law, David," he said, "I should like to indulge you in it; but, as you know, I cannot afford to send you away to school. I think the best thing for you to do is to take up with your Uncle Herbert's offer, and go in the bank."

The half-concealed ridicule of his family had been perfectly perceived by the boy. It was evident that if he was stupid, at least he was not obtuse. His china-blue eyes had a film of embarrassment over them. He knocked a spoon off the table with his sleeve, and, stooping to lift it, overturned a glass of water on the clean table-cloth.

"David!" said his mother, sharply.

Dick, a little sympathetic, knowing how luck will get down on a fellow, ventured to remark:

"David's worked like a horse to make his exams, and he made 'em bully well. I think he ought to have a little fun before he's shut up in that hole of Uncle Herbert's. Can't he have a month or two for a good old time?"

Something quite unheard of happened at that moment. David, the fool—who wanted to be a judge—burst into noisy and uncontrollable weeping.

"Well, well, what does this mean?" asked Mr. Marvin, looking at his wife.

"It has been a trying day for David," she ventured, in faint, feminine accents.

David got up and stumbled heavily out of the room. His brother looked a trifle awed. Something must have happened to make a fellow bawl like that.

What had really happened was that

a boy's vague and incohesive dream—a stately and illuminated dream—had been shattered with one blow of the bludgeon of Reality.

David had worked three years at accounts in his uncle's bank. He did his work with reliability, and seemed, indeed, heavy and sullen as he was, to have found his gray métier. At least, Dick—who was developing—said to Cornelia Rutherford, with whom he was “going”:

“David's running up to his limit. He'll never beat his present record.”

“I suppose not,” said Cornelia, holding out her slender hand for Dick to snap the glove-buttons—a task which he performed with alacrity; “David's not like you, Dick.”

“No,” said Dick, with a sense of all that implied; “I mean to get on, Cornie. You know, it was something having those Zeta Psi fellows come down here to look me up as soon as they heard I was going to the university. But I held off. I expect to get a good deal of rushing when I'm at college. I may as well take all that's coming to me.”

“I should say so!” acquiesced Cornelia, giving him her lace parasol to carry.

“I mean to make the most of my chances,” went on Dick, straightening himself. “Now, when David was ready for college father wasn't able to send him. I don't know as David was exactly cut out for college life, anyway. But I've got the chance, and I mean to distinguish myself, Cornie, for—for you.”

“Oh!” said Cornelia, thrilling with delight. The two young creatures, being in a safe arcade of September foliage made by the beeches that met across the street, paused for a moment to look into each other's eyes. It was a charming moment. The little gold leaves dropped softly upon their heads. The golden carpet of leaves lay beneath their feet.

“Dick!” said Cornelia, with an accent as unmistakable as the call of a quail to its mate.

“Cornie!” he answered, inspired. He would conquer the world for that little, red-headed girl, in the frock of awkward length, standing there with her selfish, pretty face glorified. But he saw the glory, not the selfishness. Perhaps he would not have objected to the selfishness if he had seen it. There was, indeed, no reason why he should.

The Zeta Psis thought well of their new member. They had always liked a man to be up and doing. Dick Marvin was that, undeniably. His manners were free, gay, confident and charming. His wardrobe was irreproachable. He was as correct in his apparel at breakfast as at dinner. He showed a good-natured willingness to help any fellow out of trouble, and first, last, and always, he was for his fraternity.

“That freshman will do us credit yet,” said the upper classmen, nodding their solemn heads.

He was, indeed, a convincing creature. He stood six feet to a fraction, and was well set up. His features were clean-cut, severe and handsome. In spite of his boyish freedom of tongue, there was a certain conservatism in his manner. Under the influence of the fraternity, he acquired a greater propriety of speech.

“Young Marvin's coming on,” the Zeta Psis congratulated themselves. They regarded him as being largely of their own creation.

Dick, on his part, bore himself loftily toward the world. He became conscious of his ancestors, who were, indeed, of a good breed and some achievement. His home, his father's well-established business, his mother's social position in her town, his uncle's presidency of the village bank, even his brother's association with the banking business, began to be appreciated by him. In the course of a few months, he had succeeded in exaggerating their importance. He referred to “my people” with proud accents. He felt himself the member of an assured family.

"My brother has the commercial instinct of the family," he would say to the fellows; "he took to banking."

If there were any lack in this life, Cornelia supplied it. She was away at a fashionable boarding-school, and was receiving her own impressions of the world. Dick and she corresponded constantly. They had agreed that they were to live for each other, and they were under the impression that they were doing it.

Dick had a photograph of her pretty face, framed, on the walls. When the Zeta Psis asked about her—and it was etiquette to ask—Dick looked preternaturally grave.

"That young lady," he said, "well—I've known her ever since I was a child. Her people have always been intimate with mine. She's away at Miss Chaffee's school now."

The Zeta Psis were gentlemen. They said no more, but it was taken for granted that Marvin would do no "fussing" at college. Destiny had already done for him. This, also, added to Dick's prestige. He was made an officer of the fraternity.

David, meantime, pursued his way somewhat dejectedly. He grew to feel less and less at home in his own house. He was unpopular with the young people of his own set, and shy and sullen before girls. The only person with whom he felt really at ease was Liston, the cashier at the bank. Liston had whirlwind qualities which swept the fears out of David's soul. He would get David to go on his tandem cycle with him, and the two, far away from the habitations of man, would shout and sing and laugh. Whenever David did succeed in overcoming his timidity he had to do it by revolt.

Liston told him he liked to take the world by the horns. "Save your money and invest it, my boy," he said; "I look forward to bulling the market, some time. I'd like to stir things up on 'Change once."

At intervals, Liston went to the city, to practise roaring and tossing in his

capacity as an amateur bull. He really had his victories, which he confided to David. He asked David to go in with him. Some of his plans seemed a little complex to David, who liked a straightforward way of doing things; but then, on the other hand, what Liston proposed seemed to represent power and independence.

"My father and mother think I'm a fool—they've always thought so," David confided to his friend.

"Show 'em!" said Liston.

"Dick always laughed at me, too," went on David.

"I guess you'll come out ahead of Dick," smiled Liston, in a meaning manner. "If we come out all right on this deal—and I don't see how we can help it—you can rig yourself up, and go down and visit Dick and give him a blow-out. Make him a present of a hundred or two, and see if he doesn't think better of you."

A look of not ungenerous vanity came to the china-blue eyes. The serious face glowed for a moment.

"I'd give the world to have Dick really cotton to me," he said. "Isn't he a corking fellow?"

There was no other word to call it by. It was embezzlement. The court called it that. The newspapers did not mince it. Richard Marvin whispered it hoarsely to his wife; and she, yet more hoarsely, had repeated it in torture.

"What! Not David? Embezzlement? No, no!—oh, God, no!"

The Zeta Psis spoke the word pityingly. "It's a knock-out blow for poor Dick," they said. "By Jove, you know, we've got to stand by him."

Dick, face downward on the bed, saw despair. "I can never hold up my head again," he thought. "All the fellows will know! Cornelia will hear of it! What's the use of trying to get on?"

David's uncle, the president of the bank, admired the Spartan virtues. "I'm responsible to my depositors," he said. "Let the law take its course."

It took it. Sentence was pronounced. David Marvin went to his punishment. His mother shut herself in her house; his father grew grim, silent and old.

"Live it down, old man," said the Zeta Psis, to Dick. "Show the stuff in you!"

Dick, pale, handsomer than ever, moved about with a melancholy dignity. Every one showed him the most marked consideration. A pathetic interest attached to him, and the university felt itself magnanimous when it elected him, in his third year, marshal. He came to be looked upon as an influence, and there was no denying that he had a dominating personality.

When he came home, in his junior year, for the Summer vacation, he fairly forced his father and mother out of their gloom.

"Come," he urged, "are you going to punish me for David's sins? I think that's unfair. I don't enjoy coming home to a tomb!"

There seemed to be something in that, too.

"Mother," said Mr. Marvin, to his wife, "the boy is right. We owe something to him. We are wicked to mourn forever over a thing for which we were in no way to blame."

Mrs. Marvin sighed—perhaps she did not find it so easy to disavow all responsibility—but she yielded. They set up a billiard-room for Dick, and they made a tennis-court, and there were garden fêtes and evening parties.

Cornelia Rutherford was home. Her prettiness had become beauty, and she queened it over the Marvins, who felt complimented by her tyranny.

It chanced, one night, that Dick was giving a musicale. It was really a device to give Cornelia an opportunity to display her fine contralto voice. The old house looked very gay; there were lanterns hanging from the porches, and all the windows were open to let in the breeze.

Dick, who was used to captainship, displayed no little *savoir faire*. He looked actually distinguished in his

evening clothes, and no one could deny that he had a manner.

"We are blessed in that boy, mother," said Marvin to his wife.

The pleasures of the evening were at their height, when Dick, sitting on the sill at the open window, saw some one come slowly up the walk and then withdraw into the shadows. In a few seconds the figure reappeared, this time nearer the house. Dick slipped out on the porch, and vaulted over the balustrade.

"What do you want?" he asked, peremptorily.

"Dick!" said the man, in a choked voice.

"You—David!" There was unmistakable dismay in Dick's accents.

"Yes, Dick. The warden wanted to write, but I thought—I thought I'd rather surprise you."

Dick leaned heavily against a tree, sick and white.

"Of course," mumbled David, feebly, "I never dreamed you would be having company. I thought of—of coming home, you know. I thought you and father and mother would be here alone. I thought I could go up and—and sleep in my old room once more."

The music within doors ceased. Dick rallied himself.

"A fellow I have over from Greenboro is sleeping in your bed," he said, with aversion for the pallid, nervous man before him. "Go around to the side entry, and I'll let you in there. You can get up to the lumber-room. There's a cot there, made up. You can sleep there, and no one will know."

"Know?" said David, strengthening himself. "I don't care how much they know! They know I went to that place, don't they? Well, then, they may as well know I've got out. Why, I've squared myself. That's what the punishment is for. That cleans the slate."

"Hush!" agonized Dick; "for God's sake, hush!"

He went into the house, paused a moment among his guests, and then sauntered on again. At the little,

dark entry, he admitted his brother. David passed him silently, and made his way up the rear stairs to the old lumber-room. He knew the trick of the latch, and let himself into the stuffy, dusty atmosphere of the close and cluttered apartment. The cot stood in its immemorial location. He took off his clothes, and got in between the dusty sheets.

The sounds of revelry came up to him from below. He put his thin hand fast over his eyes, as the burning tears leaped from them.

The next morning, he was awakened by the sound of the rain. It had a near, intimate and friendly sound, and a feeling of comfort and sweetness transfused itself through him in the moment that he lay halting between sleep and waking. Then, he opened his eyes to behold the unplastered, rambling room where he and Dick had played together in their boyhood, hiding behind the chimneys or the presses, or finding treasures in the boxes and bags that littered the place. Sometimes, when the house was crowded with guests, he and Dick had slept there and thought it a privilege. They used to frighten each other deliciously with hobgoblin tales.

But none like this! They never dreamed, in their moments of most terrific imaginings, that one of them would return, a felon, fresh from his imprisonment, and that the other would grudgingly admit him, hiding him away like a thing that must not be seen in the light. No, no! neither of them had ever dreamed that!

David arose, impatiently, opened a little dormer window to let in the sweet, moist, morning air, dressed himself, made his bed, and sat on the edge of it with the enduring patience which he had learned in his latest school.

He could hear the family stirring around, and he wondered how it would be if he were to go out and throw himself in his father's arms.

In time, Dick's white face looked in the door. He had brought some breakfast with him, and he waited while David ate it.

"Father and mother will see you in the library," he said.

David made himself more presentable. Dick and he entered the room together—one, tall, elegant, well-groomed, self-complacent, with the glowing skin of an athlete and light, Summer garments; the other, shrunk-en, pallid, in hideous clothes, piteous and abject.

His father and mother might have been merciful, and were almost so; but, somehow, disgust and shame got the better of them. The family conclave came to little.

"What do you propose to do?" asked his father. "What do you ask of us?"

"Not a thing," flung back David. "What have I ever been led to expect?"

It was an interminable day. For some grotesque reason, it was thought best for David to keep out of sight of the servants till he was properly clothed. So he spent the greater part of the day in the lumber-room, one or other of his family sitting with him. They did not say very much to each other. They sat in heavy silence, like those who watch beside the dead.

But that night, after all the household was in bed, the compassion of motherhood awoke in Mrs. Marvin. She had been molded by her husband till she was little more than an echo of him. Either he or Dick could set her to their time as if she had been a clock. Now, however, she struck an hour for herself.

"My Davie!" she sobbed, in her lonely room, "my poor, poor boy!" She had visions of all he had suffered. A true sense of what he had hoped for in his home-coming swept over her. In her snug, virtuous, moderate life, she had experienced only feeble passions. Now, the black waters of remorse arose about her in appalling tumult. She dressed herself with fumbling fingers. She would go to him in that desolate room, and clasp him about the neck.

"You are my own David," she would say; "after all, you are my own,

own boy! You shall have your place here—sit at your father's table, lie in clean sheets, be clothed as becomes you, live in our hearts. Oh, poor Davie, my boy!"

She saw him as he used to be when he was a little fellow, with soft, short, yellow curls and a skin of pale-gold and pink.

Indeed, it almost seemed as if this tender memory materialized, and guided her with swift, pattering feet out of her luxurious room, along the corridor to the passage that led to the kitchen attic. And, as she went, the sweetest feelings she had known for years flooded her. She was herself—not a woman acting at the dictation or along the lines laid down by another. She would take the poor, poor head in her arms; she would overcome with the abundance of her love the impoverishment of that dear heart!

Ah, little figure, running on before, you cannot go too swiftly!

The door opens—the desolate room, with the rain sweeping in at the dormer, is there!

"David! David!"

The wind has blown her candle out.

"My own boy, it is your mother! I have come to let you know how I love you, dearest—how I have loved you all the time. Oh, David, my first born!"

She has groped with eager hands upon the cot. She has closed the window and relighted the candle. She has searched the room.

She has searched the house. He is not in it anywhere; and the rain is sweeping in angry gusts without.

They found a note.

"I hated to do it," he had written. "I have taken the roll of money that was in father's box. I might have waited and asked, but I knew you would all think you had got off cheap enough. However, I shall send the money back one day. And that will be the only time you will ever hear from me. So please set your minds at rest."

He kept his word. He sent the money back three years from the day

he had taken it. His letter was dated from an Indian pueblo of New Mexico.

"I hope you are all prosperous and happy," he wrote, "and feel no bitterness toward me. I feel none toward you. I have now set my life so far apart from yours that I cannot imagine that our ways will ever cross again. I have married an Indian woman—or, at least, you would call her so. She is a member of one of the desert tribes. I am living among her people. I do not expect you to understand how I could do this thing. I will only say that now you can put me quite out of your minds."

Dick, who was married to Cornelia, told her of the letter.

"An Indian woman!" she said, staring.

"Ah, well!" he sighed, "what could you expect?"

Cornelia looked about nervously to see if the servants were within hearing.

"At least," pursued Dick, "he has some shreds of honesty left."

Cornelia busied herself with her breakfast, and said nothing. She had, indeed, other things to think of. Life was a busy affair with Cornelia. She had brought her husband a handsome fortune, which, united to his own constantly developing interests, had made her the most opulent young matron in the prosperous town. Her determined nature, her intelligent selfishness and abundant physical gifts gave her great advantages. She used them enthusiastically. Her home was handsome, her entertainments unique, her energy unrivaled. Dick was tremendously proud of her. All of the Marvins were. Only, for all of her satisfaction with what life had brought, Dick's mother had hours when she locked her doors on the world. She seemed to have missed something, somehow. For a long time she looked forward to the day when she would have a grandchild to love. But, as the years passed, she drew more and more into herself.

One night—a night of heavy rain—her husband, returning late, missed

her from her room. He searched the house for her, unavailingly, but when he returned to her room, she was there, with tear-stained face. He questioned, half in sympathy, half in anger. He suspected that she had been to that bleak chamber under the eaves. But she said—for a commonplace woman—a curious thing:

"The soul must perform some rites of its own, Richard." And even he was abashed, and asked no more.

Ten years had passed since Dick had placed the wedding-ring on Cornelia's finger.

Now, after months of formality, they were walking again where the September foliage made a bower over the street. Once more the beeches beat them with a golden rain. Once more their feet trod a golden carpet.

"My business, Cornelia," said Dick, "takes me South. I ought to be in Mexico some months. I must also visit New Mexico and Arizona. I may go to Nevada. I cannot tell when I shall be back."

There was a certain arrogant opulence about Cornelia. The locks which had been glowing auburn in her youth were darker now, and arranged in a coronal upon her handsome head. Her mouth was commanding, her tone emphatic. There was a rich plenitude about her fine costume of reddish-brown, and distinction even in the ornaments she wore. She smiled with easy indulgence at her husband.

"Dick," she said, "go where you please and stay as long as you please, and good luck go with you."

"Thank you," Dick retorted, bitterly.

"And as for me, Dick, I might as well sail with the Babcocks. They are to be in Greece and Sicily this Winter, and——"

"It's to be quite a party, I suppose?" The simple words appeared to have a sinister significance, for they brought a flood of angry color to Cornelia's face.

"Oh, it's to be quite a party," she admitted, with bravado.

They walked in silence a moment. The sun was setting in a sky of gold, and the place was transfigured.

"Dick," Cornelia said, at last, "what's the use in staying together and hating each other more and more?"

"At least," he retorted, breathing heavily, "I owe it to myself to see that my wife does not compromise herself."

"Dick!" she cried. They stopped in their walk, and stood as they had years before, screened in with beechen gold.

"Oh, Cornie, Cornie!" he groaned.

He had visited the waste places. He had looked into the heart of the earth. He had met curious men. Now, obeying an impulse he could not control, he journeyed on and on into the silences of the yellow world of sand, seeking his brother.

It was early night when he left the railroad at the proper station.

"There will be no stage till to-morrow afternoon," said the station-agent. "Better go up to the hotel."

But there was a wagon standing by the platform, which an Indian was loading with merchandise that had come on the train.

"Where does that man go?" he asked.

"He goes to the pueblo."

"Will he take me?"

"You can ask him. Some of those fellows will have nothing to do with white men."

But the Indian seemed willing enough. When he had finished loading, Marvin took a seat beside him. The Indian turned his horses toward the south. They drove away into the waste.

The horses went at an even trot over the yellow floor. The stars were above in millions—intimate, mysterious, immutably ancient. All, indeed, appeared to be of old. The driver, silent, patient, strong, was a man who seemed to have dwelt in the immemorial places. He removed his hat and his long, profuse black hair blew about

his face, which was as immobile as that of the sphinx.

Dick asked no questions about anything. The man made no remarks. It seemed best to go on in silence.

After a time, they came to a ruined city—at least, so it appeared. It was, in fact, a group of lava rocks, curiously castellated. A city of brooding men might have lived in the sad chambers of those dwellings not made with hands.

Dick, town-bred, felt a fear of the earth creep over him.

"How far along this monstrous way do we go?" he asked.

"We go four miles more," said the man, in good English.

"What shall I do for the night?" continued Dick. "Can I sleep at your house?"

"My people do not have beds like those of your people," said the man. "But there is an American who has a house where strangers sleep."

"What is the American's name?"

"It is Marvin. He is the governor of our village."

"The governor of your village?"

The man nodded.

They went back to silence again.

At last, they came to the village. Dick could see the adobes rising white in the starlight. They were compacted of the hill—they opened out of it, clung to it, crowned it. They seemed as much a part of the earth as did the hill itself.

A delicious perfume came in whiffs to Dick's nostrils. He was aware that he had reached a place of growing things; and now before him arose a dark island in the pale sea of the arid world, which he knew for trees. He heard the indescribably soft whispering of water in the irrigating canals.

"This is Marvin's place," said the man.

Dick got out, and groped his way along a shadowy path. The trees—ah, the dearness of trees in this desert!—whispered about him. Birds stirred in their nests. The stars pierced the black foliage with their golden fires.

The path ended at a doorway, which

gleamed out white there in the dusk.

The door stood open, and a faint light burned within. Dick entered. The place appeared to be a curious combination of family sitting-room and hotel office. There was a short counter with a register upon it. A woman's work-basket with sewing in it stood on a table which was covered with a gay, flowered shawl. There were chairs about the table—one, a low rocking-chair with a stool. The walls were washed in a delicate gray, and the floor covered with a gray-and-white ingrain carpet. Some mandolins hung on the wall. At the two doors which led from the room were beautiful blankets of Indian workmanship.

Dick stood amazed at the simplicity and comfort of the place. There was an olla on a bench by the door, filled with water, and a gourd hanging above it. Dick quenched his thirst luxuriously, letting the refreshment steal softly over his throat.

The place was as silent as the grave. He could not even hear the breath of sleepers. Cautiously he lifted the curtain of one of the doors. Within was a sleeping chamber with white floor, bare walls, a freshly made bed and a chair. A monk or a prince could have asked for no more and no less.

Dick crept in and divested himself of his clothing. With a strange loathing and delight, with a sense of mingled love and treachery, with dread and anticipation, he knew himself an unbidden guest in his brother's house.

There was a sound of pushing and shoving and laughing—a chorus of soft, stifled laughs—the patter of bare feet on the hard earth. Dick, bewildered, sat up in his bed.

The peculiarly jocund sounds were growing fainter. Dick went to the narrow window, set in its deep adobe wall, and looked out.

Four little brown boys, with close-cut polls and bare feet, were wrestling out under the trees. Dick could catch the gleam of their dark eyes and their white teeth. They rolled together like

frolicsome kittens, subduing their laughter cautiously.

"These young barbarians are the sons of my brother," thought Dick, and wondered at the peculiar tingling through all his veins.

The little fellows ran, pushing and shoving, toward the back of the house. Dick got into his clothes hastily, and went out. There seemed to be no one else astir about the house. Dick continued to hear the commotion of the boys, and he followed it. He came to a crevasse in the earth—a huge, yellow crack. When he reached the edge of it, he perceived that it was a river bed. A tawny desert stream flowed through it, and the little boys were demonstrating their amphibian natures. Only their round heads appeared above the water.

Dick stood above them, laughing sympathetically. He felt as if he had been born that hour—born to this peaceful, if ancient, life. About the horizon hung rainbow scarfs. The city on the hill was alive now, and down an immemorial pathway in the rock came the people in their brilliant draperies, bearing their ollas on their heads to fill them at the spring.

The wind had a brave refreshment in it, as if it brought to that home of the sun the kiss of distant mountain snows.

Dick, with a springing step, walked back toward the house. For the first time for many months the heart within him danced.

As he entered the door of the little office, he saw a man. His back was turned, but Dick recognized him instantly. He had broadened, to be sure, and he stood with a sort of commanding confidence which had been alien to David in the old days. Yet there was no mistaking him. He wore a sort of khaki suit, and moccasins on his feet. About his waist was a scarf of carmine—a costume comfortable and appropriate and elegant.

He heard Dick's footstep, and turned.

"He will recognize me," thought Dick, with a fast-beating heart. It is true that a startled look came into the

china-blue eyes—eyes which seemed to have deepened and intensified in their expression—but, after all, the glance held no recognition.

"Good morning," said Dick. "I came here last night with one of your neighbors, and when I found the place all quiet I hadn't the heart to disturb any one. So I crept into that room, and made myself at home." He thought his brother would recognize his voice.

"Quite right," said David, heartily. "You were quite right. Day and night our door is open. Who drove you down?"

"I haven't an idea," laughed Dick.

"Have you registered?" asked David. He pushed the book toward him. Dick felt strangely mischievous. He wrote, in backhand, another name than his own, and gave as his home a city in Mexico at which he had been stationed for the last three months.

David regarded gravely what the other had written.

"We're glad to see you," he said. "I'll let them know you are here. It will not be long till breakfast."

He had the air of being untroubled by little things. Indeed, what amazed Dick most of all was the abiding placidity of his face.

Was this the thief, the felon, the wanderer, the reprobate, the man of hate, sullenness, of covert acts?

But, after all, Dick would have been more surprised had he encountered all this in some other place. There is something about the unchanging peace of the desert that destroys so trivial a thing as surprise.

Dick reflected, with interest, upon the lack of recognition on the part of his brother. He recalled the fact that when David had last seen him he was a lad, with beardless lips, slight and of boyish gesture. Now, with increased stature, broad shoulders, a full beard, a man's confident ways, he certainly had undergone a great change. Added to this was the fact that of all the things that David might be able to imagine—and he had never been distinguished for a vivid imagination—

the appearance of his brother was the last.

There came the sound of a curious drum. Dick's host entered, smilingly.

"Breakfast is served," he said. The phrase seemed, somehow, incongruous with the gong.

In an adjoining room a simple meal was spread—it could hardly have been simpler.

A small, brown woman, with gentle eyes, came in. She was of the desert people, obviously, but was clothed after the fashion of the Americans. A blue gown, a white apron, a wide collar of curiously made lace, completed her costume. Her hair was parted in the middle and combed back from a low, placid brow. She had about her a simple dignity which at once arrested Dick's attention.

"This is my wife," said David.

Dick held out his hand.

"I am honored, madame," he said.

She smiled at him, cordially.

"You had to find your own way in last night," she responded. "We are heavy sleepers."

"You must have easy consciences," laughed Dick—and then could have bitten his tongue out.

"We never think about that," said the woman; "we are all too busy."

"Ah!" cried Dick.

So this was desert wisdom!

The little boys were coming back from their swim. They plunged into the room, and then, perceiving a stranger, paused with a shy, yet delicate alarm, that reminded one of the arrest of a flight of mountain deer. They were beautiful creatures, he noticed, straight of limb and with soft, glowing skins. Their eyes were proud, yet sensitive.

"These are my sons," said David.

The boys came forward, one by one, to shake hands, and every one, by some gesture, reminded Dick of his old playmate. The call of blood is loud. He tingled as each brown hand was laid in his.

The family, it appeared, were not to eat with him. They went out into a sort of patio, and Dick heard

them laughing together over their meal.

After breakfast was over, Dick heard David giving directions to some men. They were laborers, evidently, and he was sending them about their tasks. There were maid-servants about the house, too, and they wore their native garments. Every one moved with a peculiar gentleness, and seemed to be in no haste about anything. For an hour, David busied himself over some accounts. Dick, feigning to read, was covertly watching him. Something in the calm exterior baffled him. How could a man, born in a complex civilization be content in this place?

"I to herd with narrow foreheads—" The quotation was cut short in his mind, for David was addressing him.

"At this hour," he said, "I sit in judgment over my people. Would it amuse you to come?"

Dick smiled, curiously. He had a memory of the awkward, ardent boy at his father's table. "I should like to be a judge," the boy had said.

The two men went out into the garden.

"You planted those trees?" asked Dick.

"I planted them," said David.

"To plant a tree, to bear a son, to write a book—these three things the wise man will do," quoted Dick.

"I have not yet written a book," smiled David.

"There is time," said Dick.

"How have you demonstrated the wisdom of your proverb?" asked David. There was a certain benevolence in the glance he turned upon the younger man.

"In no wise. I have not planted a tree, nor borne a son, nor written a book."

"There is time," responded David, throwing back Dick's words.

David went out and sat under a *Grevillea* tree.

"Will you sit beside me?" he asked. Dick sat at his right hand.

Down from the village came certain of the people. They ranged themselves about their governor. Bonita,

the wife of David, came out and sat beside Dick.

"Do you understand the language of our people?" she asked. Dick shook his head. She began a low, running translation, keeping him acquainted with all that happened.

There came first an old, old man, dried as parchment, swathed in white. His burnous—if one may call it so—enveloped him with countless beautiful folds. He spoke with a fierce intensity.

"The young men no longer heed me," he complained. "The maidens no longer consult me. I brew potions, but they do not drink them; and all one week I made incantations for the son of Antoine, and yet the white-medicine woman did what she could. The child died!"

"You did what you could, father," said the judge. "Also, the white-medicine woman did what she could. The child's day had come."

"Our magics crossed," the old man retorted, a senile treble shrilling through his tones.

"Nay," quoth the judge, "for goodness cannot fight with goodness, and both of you were anxious to serve the child."

"But who is he that undermines me with the young men and the maidens, so that they no longer come to me to learn the true ways of things?"

"The new time, father, is that which undermines thee. Behold, the young men and the maidens are sent from the village to the school provided by the great father of our country. They return learned in the new ways, but grateful to thee, father, for thy long guidance."

The old man heard. He wrapped his voluminous draperies closer about him. With long, swift strides, he turned his face toward the desert.

"He has gone to mourn in some place where none can see him," whispered Bonita.

"I pity him," said Dick.

"The schools cannot teach him," replied Bonita; "the grave must teach him."

Then came a woman in the prime of life.

"It is a matter of a thief," she said, in a lofty manner. "Daily I go many times to the spring to fill my jars with water, but always Lojaya, who lives next to me, she being heavy with child, and indolent, steals my water, so that, weary as I am, I must go again to the spring."

David spoke. "And who art thou that thou shouldst not go to the spring for one who is unable? Hear me; once in the morning and once in the evening shalt thou go to the spring for thy neighbor, and she will tamper no more with thy ollas."

And other judgments he gave, not a few. Then returned from the village one whom he had sent thither, bringing with him two young men and a maiden. These David summoned before him, and when they faced him he said to the girl:

"Rita, these young men, Joseph and Juan, disturb the peace of the village with their quarrels. Last night they fought and drew knives, and would have done harm to each other had not men wiser than they parted them."

Rita shrugged a pair of round shoulders, and twirled her heavy silver beads—of octagon shape they were, and very curious.

"Is it my fault?" she inquired.

"Assuredly, it must be thy fault, Rita; for, since they both ache to marry thee, one or the other thou must wed, and set them both at rest."

Rita turned upon the young men by her side a look of inextinguishable coquetry.

"But I love another," she said, "one who is dead."

"If that be so," said David, "Joseph shall be sent to the Navajos, to learn of their smiths, Juan to the Lagunos, to learn of their farmers, and we shall be troubled no more."

"Oh, not Joseph!" cried the girl.

A low ripple of laughter spread among the people. The younger ones clapped their hands. The rejected lover stood erect, with an immobile countenance; but the accepted one turned

sheepishly away, and the girl sped swiftly toward the spring where she had left her water jugs as she came to answer the groom's summons.

David signified that the hour was over, and, laughing and joking among themselves, the people turned away.

"They are pleased with the judgment," said Bonita, nodding and looking proudly at her husband.

Dick drew a large gold coin from his pocket, and gave it to her.

"Will you not run with this to Rita?" he asked. "It is for her wedding dower. She will take it from your hands with more pleasure than from mine."

Bonita took it and hastened away after the girl. There was no one left by the Grevillea tree. Dick arose and stood before his brother.

Far off, the voices of the people sounded. The early wind had died and the sun of the desert was swinging along his mighty course. Dick, alien to the place, felt a strange sinking of the

heart. This patient man, yet stern, this patriarch who guided a childish people, this pioneer who was not afraid of the waste, this man who had redeemed himself, this brother who had been outraged—how would he deal with him?

"Judge me!" said Dick, a passion of self-loathing swaying him. "For I am that brother who always laughed you down when you spoke; I am that brother who took your chance away and would not give you yours; I am that brother who, in the hour of your downfall, sorrowed for myself and not for you; who, in your shame, offered you no comfort; I am that brother—oh, David, judge me as you will—who forced you to creep like a thief into your father's house; David, I am that brother whose vanity and selfishness drove you out of the world of civilized men into this desert!"

Bonita, returning slowly, with a song on her lips, found her husband and the stranger strained together, weeping, in a fraternal embrace.



A ROSE SPRAY

THE keenest pain a lover knows
Is that which kindles in Her scorn,
For then he finds above Love's rose—
The thorn.

But, oh, what ecstasy is born
When She a tender smile bestows!
For then he finds above the thorn—
Love's rose!

FELIX CARMEN.



WHAT SHE THOUGHT ABOUT IT

SHE—Why, I thought the widow was going to let two years elapse before marrying again?

HE—That was her original intention, but she told me confidentially that she thought she ought to have eight months off for good behavior.

EXPERT INSTRUCTION

SOME LETTERS FROM THE PRESENT-HOUR CORRESPONDENCE COLLEGE
OF JOURNALISM TO A PUPIL

By Hayden Carruth

DEAR MR. COMINGFAKER:
Your first lesson-paper has been received and carefully examined. We find much to criticize, of course, but also much of promise. In your imaginary interview you quote your man thus: "I wish to say"—wrong. "I wish to state"—correct. "He stated." "He prepared a statement." "They were stating." The word "say" is used only in conversation, magazines and books. In your suicide, you neglect to close with, "No cause was assigned for the rash act." This shows carelessness. We like the way you refer to the departed as "the unfortunate man," however. We enclose lesson No. 2. Look out for the practical work.

Yours truly,
A. OLDHAND.

DEAR MR. COMINGFAKER:

Your second lesson-paper shows improvement. But a paragraph containing nothing out of the ordinary, you should always begin, "Oddly enough—" In the third line, there is an excellent chance to use the word "fad," which you missed. In regard to your imaginary murder: "Blunt instrument," good; "foul play is suspected," very good; "police are reticent," excellent, though you should have added, "But they are believed to be in possession of important clues." You should also state that "bad blood" existed between the victim and somebody. Your diagram of

the man's henhouse is only so-so. You neglected to put in the tracks of the chickens.

Your practical interview with the servant-girl of your neighbor lacks spiciness. When she refused to answer some of your questions you should have tried what a couple of dollars would do. If she still refused, you should have put the answers you wanted in your report, anyhow. Enclosed find third lesson.

Yours truly,
A. OLDHAND.

DEAR MR. COMINGFAKER:

Your anecdote is readable. The scene is laid in the South, however, and we do not anywhere find the phrase, "befo' de wah." This is very bad. You should not have given up on your shooting affair—it is easy. Shots always "ring out," and "startle the inmates of the building." The other man "returns the shots," or "seeks safety in flight." The chief point to be remembered, however, is the calibre of the revolver; always get this, even if you miss the names of the men. Your imaginary interview is rather good, but in the man's statement you make him use language which is much too natural. Make your descriptions colloquial, if you care to, but remember, in quoting a person, to be bookish and stately. Study the dictionary for uncommon words. Read Dr. Samuel Johnson. N. B.—Important exception: When

quoting an elderly, dignified and educated man—say, a college president—make him use the latest slang. It adds very much.

Glad to know from your report on practical work that the lump on your head where the door-knob struck it is getting better. In doing keyhole work, the journalist has to be very wary. The door is liable to be opened at any moment. Send herewith third lesson.

Yours truly,

A. OLDHAND.

DEAR MR. COMINGFAKER:

We are sorry to see that you under-value details. A paragraph about a stormy Winter day is a small matter, but it betrays the amateur not to speak of it as a "veritable blizzard." Your despatch from the agricultural regions after the rain is very bad. You do not say, "The farmers are jubilant." In regard to the other storm, you should have stated that it "reached the proportions of a cloudburst." We have marked you 100 on your runaway. "Frightened animal dashed wildly"—very good. "Serious accident was narrowly averted"—capital. Try to become accustomed to using the words "quiet" and "quietly;" as, "a quiet wedding," "he was dressed quietly," etc. In your imaginary interview, where the man commences his statement by expressing ignorance of the subject in hand, you make him begin, "I don't know"—bad. "I cannot say"—no better. "I have no information on the subject"—still worse. "That I cannot state"—correct. Should be used invariably.

You complain because, in your practical interview with the stranger you met on the street, he kicked you into the gutter when you asked him if there was anything to conceal about his wife's past. You will not make an up-to-date journalist if you stick at little things like this. Suppose your legs did slip down the sewer opening, you should have shouted another good stiff question at him. We send the

next lesson. You will notice that it is chiefly political.

Yours truly,

A. OLDHAND.

DEAR MR. COMINGFAKER:

Take this lesson again. You have evidently worked hard, but there is much that you fail to grasp. You are right in interviewing "a prominent citizen" and a "leader high in the councils of the party," but you strangely neglect the "well-known Western senator who does not wish to be quoted." The senator and the leader should be "stopping at a prominent up-town hotel." You seem hopelessly entangled as to what constitutes a "statesman" and a "politician." A statesman belongs to your party—a politician to the opposite party. The supporters of a statesman are "earnest workers for the cause of good government," but the followers of the politician are "henchmen." Henchmen obey the "behest of their party boss." Local henchmen are "heelers," and henchmen in the aggregate at convention time are "cohorts." You are right in saying that the speaker of your party "scores" the opposition, but you fail utterly when interviewing the seceder from the opposition. In causing him to refer to his former friends, you should make him "very bitter."

In your practical work-paper, you make a much better showing. Glad to see that you promptly put your foot in the front door when they tried to slam it shut in your face. Sorry your foot was so badly crushed, but pleased to note that you do not complain. If your foot has to be amputated, notify us, and we will forward cork foot. State size of shoe worn.

Please try this lesson again next week, using properly the expressions, "much chagrined," and, "hints of bribery are rife." When you have mastered this lesson, we shall send you our special society-function paper.

Yours truly,

A. OLDHAND.

LA FIANCÉE DU DESTIN

Par Jules Bois

LE train de Limours, sous le soleil du printemps, eut un sifflement de joie en s'arrêtant à la petite gare de Sceaux-Ceinture, enfouie sous les charmes, les sapins et les acacias du Parc Montsouris. Antoine Amoris, sur le quai de la gare, étroit comme un trottoir, guette les très rares portières qui s'entr'ouvrent; enfin une jeune fille bondit sur le gravier. Une émotion longtemps contenue fait trépidant le cœur du jeune homme. C'est bien elle; il la reconnaît, hardie et pourtant incertaine, effarouchée de ce rendez-vous qu'elle a voulu, mince et délicate, dans sa robe de linon, sous son chapeau léger d'où tombe une guirlande de glycines; son cou transparaît à travers le boa de plumes qui la défend contre le matin encore frileux. Tout de suite, il communique avec les yeux étranges, dévorateurs du visage, aux larges pupilles dilatées.

Elle va vers lui franchement, et sa main tremble un peu sur le cristal de l'ombrelle. Ils se sourient:

— Merci, dit-elle; vous êtes bon.

Elle donna son ticket à la barrière, et silencieux, craignant l'indiscrétion des regards, ils glissèrent côte à côte vers l'allée du petit lac.

— Vous n'avez pas mal jugé ma démarche, dit-elle, d'une voix un peu blanche, quoique assurée, puisque vous l'avez acceptée. Vous avez compris que j'avais un absolu besoin de vous voir... J'attends de vous le conseil qui décidera de ma vie...

Une buée transparente planait encore sur l'eau tranquille comme un peu de mystère sur toute destinée;

près de la rive, un saule, avec ses branches tremblantes, se penchait sur ce joli miroir, comme une amoureuse qui voudrait y deviner l'avenir.

Le parc était accueillant, presque vide de promeneurs; à peine çà et là quelques voitures d'enfants; un poète, aux pantalons élimés, leva la tête au-dessus de son livre pour les regarder passer comme la réalisation vivante d'une idylle.

Antoine se taisait: rapidement, dans son cerveau, il résumait les incidents qui les avaient conduits l'un vers l'autre jusqu'à cette rencontre si innocente et qui pouvait passer pour un rendez-vous d'amour.

Ce n'était cependant pas une intrigue banale comme celles qui se nouent bien souvent entre homme de lettres et aventurière. Antoine ne s'y fût d'ailleurs pas prêté. Ses trente ans déjà glorieux, et las des frivolités, où s'attarde parfois toute la vie de certains romanciers, s'étaient retirés à côté de ce parc lointain, dans cette rue Gazan composée de quelques maisons à peine, toutes récentes et n'ayant d'autre vis-à-vis qu'un rideau d'arbres parfumés. Il n'avait pu s'empêcher de remarquer régulièrement à ses conférences, occupant toujours le même fauteuil, une jeune fille pâle et ardente qui semblait boire son geste, ses paroles, avec ses yeux trop grands, inquiets au moins autant de savoir que d'aimer. Une fois, elle lui avait dit quelques mots hésitants après la séance, toute émue au milieu d'un cercle d'amis qui le félicitaient. Il avait appris ainsi son nom, Mlle Jacqueline Lemyre; elle avait perdu, il y a deux ans, son père, un banquier

assez original pour laisser après lui une réputation aussi intacte que sa colossale fortune.

Lorsque, dans son cabinet de travail, Antoine préparait le plan d'une causerie ou écrivait, avec ce style à la fois doux et passionné qui lui était propre, une page de roman, où il disséquait les mœurs du temps, il se prenait tout à coup à laisser là sa ligne inachevée... Au-dessus du manuscrit planait, plus visible qu'un portrait, le visage de Jacqueline, délicate hantise, souvenir obsédant. Il était arrivé à cet âge où la jeune fille devient le plus impérieux attrait. Et c'était non seulement le désir de la compagne sûre et charmante, de l'associée aux inquiétudes et aux joies, mais encore la haine des solitudes mauvaises, l'horreur des douteuses unions, la fringale de la race, le rêve des enfants qu'il ne faut pas mettre au monde trop tard, de peur de ne point les préserver assez et de n'en point jouir. Jacqueline lui plaisait entre toutes, parce que le hasard banal d'une soirée ou d'une visite d'après-midi ne l'avait pas mise sur sa route. Elle était venue vers son âme, à cause de ses pensées, pour ce qu'il y avait de meilleur en lui, son talent et son éloquence. Une Providence, amoureuse de son bonheur, la conduisait à cette même stalle, d'où elle l'applaudissait—beaucoup mieux par la clarté subite de son regard ou la grâce conquise de son sourire que par ses doux mains gantées. Ah! non pas la fiancée des circonstances ou des vaines conventions mondaines, mais la promise des affinités secrètes, la fiancée du destin!

Mais Amoris n'était ni un neurasthénique ni un veule; ce n'était pas un chimérique non plus; s'étant fait lui-même, à force de luttés et de travail, il savait discipliner ses impulsions, arracher de son cœur les fantaisies inutiles ou morbides.

"Je n'ai pas le droit, se disait-il, de songer à Mlle Lemyre; sa fortune nous sépare à jamais. Elle est d'ailleurs très jeune, et la sympathie réelle... certes, qu'elle me témoigne par son assiduité, n'est sans

doute qu'une de ces flammes délicieuses et passagères qui s'éteignent dans le cœur des adolescentes aussi vite qu'elles se sont allumées."

Aussi avait-il été bouleversé par une lettre franche et insistante qu'il avait reçue la veille et lui demandant un rendez-vous immédiat. Tout d'abord, il pensa à ne pas répondre ou à refuser. Mais n'était-ce pas obéir à un préjugé indigne d'eux? N'était-ce pas douter de lui et d'elle? Et il avait proposé cette promenade matinale et sans périls, car si réellement il pouvait être utile à Jacqueline, il l'aimait déjà trop pour ne pas risquer un peu à le tenter. Et maintenant elle parlait à côté de lui, avec la voix exquise du rêve.

— Si vous saviez comme j'ai été impressionnée par certaines de vos phrases et par plusieurs chapitres de vos livres, au point de voir la vie avec des yeux nouveaux et de sentir se transfigurer mon cœur!

Il ne répondait pas, plus ému qu'elle encore sous son apparence ferme, attendant qu'elle dise la véritable raison de sa démarche, espérant et désespéré à la fois.

— Ma mère veut me marier, dit-elle, et j'en suis effrayée comme de quelque grand malheur... Je vous crois, je vous sais mon ami; que dois-je faire?... Je n'aime pas celui à qui on me donne... En vous écoutant, j'ai appris qu'il ne fallait obéir qu'à sa conscience... Je n'ose trahir mon cœur... je n'ose pas non plus désobéir à ma mère, qui tient beaucoup à ce mariage et que je vais faire souffrir.

Maintenant le soleil avait vaincu la dernière fumée de la brume. Les cygnes fendaient l'eau du lac comme de petites nefs blanches; les bouvreuils et les chardonnerets gazouillaient dans les marronniers; tout cette nature quasi urbaine souriait en rayons et en chants; mais un voile de détresse empêchait les yeux du jeune homme de goûter cette joie de renaître à la vie; et il n'entendait que les palpitations dures de son cœur.

— Il faut vous marier! dit-il.

Il avait prononcé ces paroles comme s'il avait dicté sa propre condamnation, avec l'héroïsme de ceux qui marchent à leur supplice. Quelle dérision que ce côté à côté délicieux hâtant la rupture définitive! Et c'était lui qui avait dit cela. Pourquoi? Parce que, cela, il était honnête et loyal qu'il le dit.

Elle le regarda étonnée, ses grands yeux chavirés de douleur:

— C'est vous qui me parlez ainsi? Vous en qui j'ai foi, vous voulez que j'immole mon destin!

Antoine eut envie de laisser crier son tourment, de lui avouer que c'était à elle qu'il avait pensé comme à la future épouse, qu'elle venait de lui poignarder le cœur, et, qu'en lui disant d'obéir à sa mère il avait, lui, à son tour, creusé encore la blessure horrible. Mais il se dompta: elle était trop riche; il ne pouvait entrer par effraction dans cette famille, comme un voleur de dot.

— J'avais fait pourtant un autre rêve, murmura-t-elle; accepter non pas ce qu'on appelle vulgairement un beau parti, c'est-à-dire une grosse situation avec de l'argent, mais *choisir*... oui, choisir un cœur selon le mien, une intelligence que je pusse admirer et suivre, adopter une destinée que je pourrais charmer et agrandir... et j'allais vers vous, je le confesse, espérant que vous confirmeriez ma secrète préférence, que vous me répondriez: "Agissez selon votre conscience."

Maintenant, Amoris s'était repris; il parla avec une apparente sérénité le langage de la raison et du familial devoir; il dit quelle méfiance il faut avoir pour les passions qui s'éveillent, la nécessité de regarder la vie comme une épreuve et une tâche à accomplir; avec logique, avec sûreté, il déchira le frêle tissu d'espoir dont il avait enveloppé son avenir, il anéantit le bonheur longtemps caressé en lui-même. Il croyait être sincère et juste en se meurtrissant.

Cependant l'heure avait passé à cette besogne délicate et horrible. Ils avaient fait le tour du lac paisible; lui, avec une âme qui se suicide, elle, ré-

voltée contre le sort, indignée de le sacrifier en se sacrifiant. Sous le saule, elle voulut s'arrêter, oppressée à s'évanouir. Et la certitude qu'elle l'aimait se fit en lui; ses nerfs de jeune fille tremblaient sous la pâleur de la peau, autant que les ramures de l'arbre. Elle prit son bras, défaillante; elle se donnait dans ce geste simple, mieux que si elle avait été son épouse, comme s'ils étaient tous deux à la veille de mourir...

Sur le quai de la gare, où il la raccompagna, quand le train venu de Sceaux siffla de triomphe sous le dôme des charmes, des sapins et des acacias, elle le regarda de ses yeux étranges, aux pupilles dilatées, avec une ferveur irrésistible. Elle jeta le mot suprême:

— Vous ne voulez donc pas de moi?

Il pâlit affreusement, ses yeux se fermèrent. Le train, les arbres, la gare, les quelques voyageurs, tout disparut pour lui, s'engouffra dans une sensation de désastre. Il répondit faiblement:

— Partez, votre mère doit vous attendre, ne l'affligez pas.

Le lendemain, Antoine se réveilla, le cerveau et le cœur plus fatigués que s'il avait passé une nuit blanche à sa table de travail. Qu'il avait mal dormi, sa fenêtre entr'ouverte aux souffles exquis montant du parc printanier, éclosion des sèves, longues plaintes des rossignols qui faisaient de cette Suisse brève aux confins de Paris un bouquet d'harmonie et d'odeurs! Vainement, il avait tenté de combattre l'idée fixe par la lecture des chefs-d'œuvre préférés, par l'application acharnée à traduire sur les feuilles éparses le trouble de son âme, que la plus grande tempête de sa vie dévastait. Avec effroi, il sentit impuissant son style, et les plus belles paroles humaines restaient sans saveur devant le souvenir de telle inflexion de voix de l'adorée... Qu'allait-il devenir, si rien n'allait pouvoir le distraire de sa douleur?

La matinée s'écoula dans la dépression et la somnolence après la fièvre de la nuit. Il déjeuna à peine, puis, dans une brusque décision, ordonna de pré-

parer ses valises. Il irait il ne savait où, droit devant lui, emporté par une locomotive miséricordieuse, loin de ce Paris où il ne lui importait plus d'être admiré, loin de ce coin désert et mélancolique où ses plus chers rêves venaient de mourir...

En une demi-heure, il fut prêt; le sac à la main, il allait sortir quand la sonnette tinta. Il ouvrit lui-même. Sur le seuil, une femme âgée qu'il crut reconnaître, mais dont le nom lui échappa, demanda :

— M. Antoine Amoris?

Il s'inclina et fit entrer la visiteuse.

— Je suis Madame Lemyre, fit-elle en souriant.

Il eut un sursaut d'étonnement, comme à un coup de théâtre inattendu.

— Rassurez-vous, cher Monsieur, je vous tends une main reconnaissante et amie. Ma fille m'a raconté sa démarche auprès de vous. Vous avouerez-je que je l'avais autorisée?... Je vous avais admiré jusqu'ici comme penseur et comme artiste, mais vous êtes, ce qui est mieux encore, un honnête homme, et je mets la loyauté au-dessus du talent. Vous aimez ma fille qui vous aime aussi depuis longtemps et vous êtes prêt à y renoncer par une délicatesse aujourd'hui trop rare. Eh bien! je viens ici, Monsieur, vous dire moi-même que je consens à vous la donner. Vous en êtes digne. Le bonheur finit toujours par récompenser celui qui agit selon sa conscience, droitement.



THE ILL WIND

THERE is a wind that blows across Life's plain,
To some blows good, to some blows ill;
To you it comes like music's sweetest strain,
To me so bleak and chill.

Why does the wind through all these weary years,
While sweeping o'er the brine,
Bring freighted argosies to line your piers,
And shattered wrecks for mine?

Why did the tempest turn from out its path
To pass your mansion by,
And on the humble cottage glut its wrath,
Where my stark children lie?

Why should it still pursue me as I go—
Something with which my spirit vainly copes—
To blast the golden harvests that I grow,
And litter all the highway with my hopes?

When Fate shall drop the distaff and the skein,
And life no more allures,
Perchance the wind will sing as sweet a strain
Above my grave as yours.

SAM DAVIS.



FIRST we teach the baby to talk, and then to hold its tongue.

THE STORY OF STELLA

By James Branch Cabell

THEY named her Stella, I fancy, because her eyes were so like stars. It is a mere detail that there do not happen to be any blue stars. I am inclined to think that Nature subsequently observed this omission, and created Stella's eyes to make up for it; at any rate, if you can imagine Aldebaran or Arc-turus polished up a bit, and set in a speedwell-cup, you will have a very fair idea of one of them. You cannot, however, picture to yourself the effect of the pair of them, as the human mind is limited.

Really, though, their effect was somewhat curious. You noticed them casually, let us say; then, without warning, you ceased to notice anything. You simply grew foolish and gasped like a newly-hooked trout, and went suddenly mad and babbled as meaninglessly as a silly little rustic brook trotting under a bridge. I have seen the thing happen any number of times. And, strangely enough, you liked it. Numbers of men would venture into the same room with those disconcerting eyes the very next evening, even appearing to seek them out, to court their perils, as it were—men who must have known perfectly well, either by report or experience, the unavoidable result of such conduct. For eventually it always ended in Stella's being deeply surprised and grieved—in somebody's Winter-garden, for choice—never having dreamed of such a thing, of course, and regarding you only as a dear, dear friend. Oh, she did it well, did Stella, and bore these frequent griefs

and surprises with, I must protest, a most exemplary patience.

But we appear to digress. Let us go back to the very beginning of the story—that is, to the place where I come into it. And, in advance, I warn you it is neither very humorous nor very pathetic; I fear it is not even especially interesting; for it treats of no stolen will, no rightful heir, no persecuted innocence nor of any such delectable matters. It is, indeed, a very paltry drama, written and staged by Destiny, that somewhat uninventive playwright. And my part therein is an unutterable minor one. I am only the chorus who comes in at intervals to make—I trust—sufficiently moral reflections on what the others are doing.

When I first knew Stella she was fifteen—an unattractive age. There were a startling number of corners to her then, and she had but vague notions as to the management of her hands and feet. In consequence, they were perpetually turning up in unexpected places and surprising her by their size and number. Yes, she was very hopelessly fifteen; she laughed unnecessarily, in a nervous fashion that was exactly three keys higher than her natural voice, and patted down her skirts six times to the minute. It seems queer now to think that Cleopatra and Stella and Helen of Troy—all the famous fair ones of history—were like that at one time—hopelessly, unattractively fifteen.

As for myself, I was at this period very old—much older than it is ever permitted any one to be afterward. I had the most optimistic ideas as to my mustache, and was wont to encourage it in secret places with the manicure-scissors. I still entertained the belief that girls were rather unnecessary nuisances, but I was beginning to perceive the expediency of concealing this opinion—even in private converse with my dearest chum, where, in our joyous interchange of various heresies, we touched upon this point very lightly, and, as I now suspect, somewhat consciously.

All this was at a certain Summer resort, of which the name is neither here nor there. Stella and I and others of our age attended the hotel hops in the evening with religious punctuality, for our well-meaning elders insisted that it amused us, and it was easier to go than to argue the point with them. At least, that was the viewpoint of the boys.

Stella has since sworn the girls liked it. I suspect in this statement a certain parsimony as to the truth. They giggled too much and were never entirely free from that haunting anxiety concerning their skirts. I honestly believe we were all miserable in unison.

We danced together, Stella and I. We conversed, meanwhile, with careful disregard of the amenities of life. Each of us, you see, feared lest the other might suspect in some common courtesy an attempt at—there is really no other word—spooning. And spooning was absurd.

Heigho! one lives and learns.

I asked Stella to sit out a dance. I did this because I had heard a man with waxed mustachios and an absolutely piratical amount of whiskers make the same request of a young lady pink-gowned and pinched-in in the proper places and—er—expansive in the proper places. It was evident to my crescent intellect that such whiskers could do no wrong.

Stella, I believe, was not uninfluenced by the example of the pinched-

in and shouldered person. As I have said, her corners were multitudinous; and it is probable that those two queer little knobs I remember at the base of her throat would be apt to render their owner uncomfortable and envious of—let us say—more ample charms. At any rate, Stella giggled and consented, and I accordingly conducted her to the third piazza of the hotel.

There we found a world that was new to us.

It was a world of sweet odors and strange lights, flooded with a kindly silence that was, somehow, composed of many lisplings and trepidations and thin echoes. The night was warm, the sky all transparency. If the comparison were not manifestly absurd, I would liken its pale color to that of blue plush rubbed against the nap. And in its radiance the stars bathed, large and bright and intimate, yet blurred somewhat, like shop-lights seen through a frosted pane; and the moon floated on it, crisp and clear as a new-minted coin. It was a Midsummer moon, grave and glorious, that compelled the eye; and its shield was faintly marked, as though some Titan had breathed on its chill surface. Its light suffused the heavens and lay upon the earth beneath us in broad splashes; and the foliage about us was dappled with its splendor, save in the open east, where the low, undulant hills wore it as a mantle.

For the trees, mostly maples of slight stature, clustered thickly about the hotel, and their branches mingled in a restless pattern of black and silver and dim green, that mimicked the laughter of the sea under an April wind. Looking down from the piazza, above the tree-tops, it was strangely like the sea, and it gave one, somehow, much the same sense of remote, unbounded spaces and of a beauty that was a little cruel. At times, whip-poorwills called to one another, eerie and shrill; but the distant music was a mere vibration in the night air, heavy with the scent of bruised grow-

ing things and filled with the cool, healing magic of the moonlight.

Taking it all in all, we had blundered upon a very beautiful place. And there we sat for a while and talked in an aimless fashion.

Then, moved by some queer impulse, I stared over the railing for a little at this great, wonderful, ambiguous world, and said, solemnly:

"It is good."

"Yes," said Stella, in a curious, quiet little voice; "it—it's very large, isn't it?" She looked out for a moment over the tree-tops. "It dwarfs one, rather," she said, at length. "The stars are so big, and so—so uninterested." Stella paused for an interval and then spoke with an uncertain laugh. "I—I think I'm rather afraid."

"Afraid?" I echoed.

"Yes," she said, vaguely; "of—of everything."

I understood, I think. Even then I knew something of the frequent insufficiency of words.

"It's a big world," I said.

"It's all before us," she went on. I think she had forgotten my existence. "It's bringing us so many things—and we don't know what any of them are. But we've got to take them—got to take them, whether we want to or not. It seems a little unfair, somehow. We've got to—got to grow up and—and marry and—die, whether we want to or not. We've no choice. And it may not matter, after all. Everything will go on as before, and the stars won't care, and what we've done and suffered may count for nothing—nothing!"

As you justly observe, a highly improbable speech for a girl of fifteen. I grant you that for an ordinary girl. In this case, we are speaking of Stella.

Candor compels me to admit that both Stella and I were unusual children—much the sort of children, perhaps, that you were at fifteen. If you are quite honest, you will acknowledge that at that age you were a prodigy of some sort. We all were. And it is precisely this belief that now leads you to question the probability of what I

am writing, and to deny to fifteen the power of thinking for itself. And why, pray? You weren't an absolute fool at fifteen, you know; you were aware of quite a number of things, if you will remember; and there were dry-throated times when the idea of death appalled you. But, of course, you were a very unusual child. Other children are different.

The point which I wish to make is that they are not.

"Are you afraid to die?" Stella asked, suddenly.

"Rather," I admitted. I really don't know why I told the truth.

"And yet we've got to—got to! Oh, I don't see how people can go on living contentedly when that's always drawing nearer—when they know they must die some day. Yet they dance and picnic and amuse themselves as if they were going to live forever. I—oh, I don't understand!"

Upon my word, I believe we were both a little insane on this occasion. Otherwise, we would scarcely have grappled with precisely this topic.

"They get accustomed to the idea, I suppose"—after a futile pause. "We're rather like rats in a trap," I suggested, poetically. "We can bite the wires and go mad, if we like, or we can eat the cheese and make the best of it; either way, there's no getting out till they come in the morning to kill us."

"Yes," sighed Stella; "I suppose we must make the best of it."

"It's the only thing to do," said I, dolefully.

"Yet—yet it's all so big and indifferent!" she cried, after a little. "And we don't know—we can't know!—what it has in store for us!"

"We'll make the best of that, too," I protested, stubbornly.

Stella sighed again. "Yes," she assented; "still, I'm afraid."

"I think I am—rather," I conceded after reflection.

There was a very long pause, now. Pitiful, ridiculous infants that we were, we were pondering, somewhat vaguely, but very solemnly, over certain mys-

teries of life and death we have since learned to accept with stolidity. We were very young, you see; to us the miracle of life was still a little impressive, and we had not yet learned to regard the universe as a more or less comfortable place thoughtfully constructed for us to reside in.

Therefore, we sat close together, Stella and I, and were deeply miserable over the *Weltschmerz*. After a little, a distant whippoorwill woke me from a chaos of reverie, and I turned to Stella. I had a vague sense that we were the only people left in the world, and I was very, very fond of her.

Stella's head was leaned backward. Her lips were parted a little, and the moonlight glinted in her eyes. . . .

"Don't!" said Stella, faintly.

I did.

Upon my soul, it simply happened! It was a matter out of my volition, out of my planning. And, oh, the wonder and sweetness and sacredness of it! and, oh, the pity that there is no second happening like that in all one's life!

Stella was not angry, as I had half expected. "That was dear of you," she said, impulsively, "but—but don't try to do it again." There was the wisdom of all the centuries in this mandate of Stella's as she rose to her feet. The spell was broken, utterly. "I think," said Stella, in the voice of a girl of fifteen, "I think we'd better go and dance now."

In the crude morning, I approached Stella, with a fatuous smile. She apparently both perceived and resented this—which was queer, as she never once looked at me. There was something of great interest in the distance; she was flushed and indignant, and her eyes wouldn't, couldn't, didn't turn for an instant in my direction.

I fidgeted.

"If," said she, impersonally, "if you believe it was because of you, you are very much mistaken. It would have been the same with anybody—anybody! You don't understand, and I don't, either. I hate you! Go away!" And she stamped her foot in a fine rage.

For the moment, I entertained a most un-Christian desire that Stella had been born a boy. In that case, I felt I really should have enjoyed sitting upon the back of her head, and grinding her nose into the dust and otherwise persuading her to cry "'Nough!" This pleasure being denied me, I sought comfort in discourteous speech.

"Umph—huh!" said I, "you think yourself so smart! Umph—huh!"

Thereupon, I wisely went away.

"Dear me!" said Stella, wondering, when I at last came back; "I should never have known you in the world! You've grown so fa—I mean, you're so well built. I've grown? Nonsense!—and, besides, what do you expect me to do in six years?—and, moreover, it's very rude of you to speak of me in that manner—quite as if I were a debt or a taste for strong drink! It's really only French heels and a pompadour, and, of course, you can't have this dance. It's promised, and I hop, you know, frightfully. Of course, I haven't forgotten—how could I?—when you were the most disagreeable boy I ever knew."

I ventured a suggestion that caused Stella to turn an attractive pink, and laugh. "No," said she, demurely; "I shall never—never—sit out another dance with you." Subsequently: "Our steps suit perfectly—heavens! you're the fifth man who's said that to-night, and I'm sure it would be very silly and very tiresome to dance through life with anybody. Men are so absurd! Oh, yes, I tell them all—every one of them—that our steps suit—even when they have just ripped off a yard or so of flounce in an attempt to walk up the front of my dress. It makes them happy, poor things! and injures nobody. You liked it, you know; you grinned like a pleased cat. I—I like cats, don't you?"

Later: "That's nonsense, you know," said Stella, critically. "Do you always get red in the face when you make love? You've no idea how queer it makes you look."

Still later: "I—I don't think I'm go-

ing anywhere to-morrow afternoon," said Stella.

Shortly afterward, I asked Stella to marry me. Pretty much every fellow I knew had done this, you understand, and it is always a mistake to appear unnecessarily reserved or exclusive. She declined—with a fluency, by the way, that bespoke considerable practice—and subsequently, as the story-books have it, was wedded to another.

I have never quite understood why Harry asked me to be best man. However, it at least enabled me to see this episode of Stella's life from the inside, and to find it—oh, quite like other weddings!

Something like this:

"Look here!" he protested, at the last moment, as we lurked in the gloomy vestry; "look here, Henderson hasn't blacked the soles of these da—blessed shoes! I'll look like an ass when it comes to the kneeling part—like an ass, I tell you! Good heavens, they'll look like tombstones!"

"If you funk now," I said, severely, "I'll never help you get married again. Oh, sainted Moses in heaven! what have I done with that ring? There's the organ! Good God, Harry, look at her!—simply look at her, man! Oh, you lucky devil! you lucky devil!"

I spoke enviously, you understand, simply to encourage him.

Followed a glaring of lights; a swishing of fans and the hum of dense, expectant humanity; a blare of music; then Stella, an incredible, immaculate vision, with glad, shamed eyes.

"—so long as ye both may live?" ended the bishop.

"I will," he quavered—with obvious uncertainty.

Stella's eyes were filled with unutterable happiness and fear, but her voice was level. I found time to wonder at its steadiness, even though just about this time I resonantly burst a button off one of my gloves. I fancy they must have been rather tight.

"—and thereto," said Stella, calmly, "I give thee my troth."

And subsequently they were Mendels-

sohned out of church, to the satisfaction of a large and critical audience. I came down the aisle with an agreeable pink-haired cousin of Stella's who had a mission in life—I forget what sort—and freckles. She proved very entertaining later in the evening.

Yes, it was quite like other weddings—oh, quite like! I wonder I remember it so well.

Stella is making tea for me.

"You're quite by way of being a gentleman," had been her greeting. Then, of a sudden, she rested both hands upon my breast. When she did that you tingled all over, in an absurdly agreeable fashion. "It was uncommonly decent of you to remember," said this impulsive young woman. "It was dear of you! And the flowers were lovely."

"They ought to have been immortelles, of course," I apologized, "but the florist was out of them." I sat down, and sighed, pensively. "Dear, dear!" said I, "to think it was five years ago I buried my dearest hopes and aspirations and—er—all that sort of thing."

"Nonsense!" said Stella, and selected a blue cup with dragons on it. "At any rate," she continued, "it's very disagreeable of you to come here and—prate like a death's-head on my wedding anniversary."

"Dear me!" said I, with a fine surprise, "so it's an anniversary with you, too?" She was absorbed in the sugar-bowl. "What a coincidence!" I suggested, pleasantly.

I paused. The fire crackled. I sighed.

"You're such poor company nowadays," Stella reflected. "You—you really ought to do something to enliven yourself." After a little, she brightened as to the eyes, and concentrated them upon the tea-making, and ventured a suggestion. "Why not fall in love?" said Stella. The minx!

"I am," I confided, venturing on sigh number two.

"I don't mean—anything silly," said she, untruthfully. "Why," she con-

tinued, with some lack of relevance, "why not fall in love with somebody else?" Thereupon, I regret to say, her glance strayed toward the mirror. Oh, she was vain—I grant you that. But I must protest she had a perfect right to be.

"Yes," said I, "that's the reason."

"Nonsense!" said Stella, and tossed her head. She now assumed her most matronly air, and did mysterious things with a perforated silver ball. I was given to understand I had offended by a severe compression of her lips, which, however, was not as effective as it might have been. They twitched mutinously.

Stella was all in pink, with gold things sparkling in unexpected places. I presume the gown was tucked and ruched and appliquéd, and had been subjected to other processes past the comprehension of trousered humanity; it was certainly becoming. I think there was an eighteenth-century flavor about it—it smacked, somehow, of a patched, mendacious, dainty womanhood, and its artfulness was of a gallant sort that scorned to deceive. It defied you, it allured you, it conquered you at a glance. It might have been the last cry from the court of an innocent Louis Quinze. It was inimitable. Ah, if I were only a milliner, I would describe that gown for you in fitting fashion! As it is, set Beer and Paquin to dredge the dictionary, and they will still fail, as I have done. For, after all, its greatest charm was that Stella wore it.

Yet, it made of her—let us say, a marquise—a marquise out of Watteau or Fragonard. Upon my word, Stella in this gown seemed out of place save upon a high-backed stone bench—set in an *allée* of lime-trees, of course, and under a violet sky—with a sleek *abbé* or two for company and with be-ribboned gentlemen tinkling on their mandolins about her. I had really no choice but to regard her as an agreeable anachronism as she chatted with me and mixed hot water and sugar and lemon into ostensible tea. She seemed quite out of place—and yet, somehow, I entertained no special desire to have her

different, or, indeed, otherwise than in this warm, colorful room, that consisted mostly of dim vistas where brass things blinked in the firelight. We had voted it cozier without lamps or candles; this odorous half-light was far more companionable. Odorous, I say, for there were a great number of pink roses about. I fancy some one must have sent them in honor of her fifth wedding anniversary.

"Harry says you talk to everybody that way," quoth she—resentfully and after a pause.

"Oh!" said I. It was really no affair of Harry's.

"Harry's getting fat," I announced, presently.

Stella looked witheringly toward the region where my waist used to be. "He isn't!" said she, indignant.

"Quite like a pig," I continued, with relish. She objected to people being well-built.

Silence. I stirred my tea.

"Dear Harry!" said she. Then—oh, you know what happened, then! I protest that unless a woman is able to exercise a proper control over her countenance, she has no right to discuss her husband with his bachelor friends. It only makes them feel like social outcasts and lumbering brutes and Peeping Toms. If they know the husband well, it positively awes them; for, after all, it is a bit overwhelming, this sudden vision of the simplicity, the credulity, the merciful blindness of women in certain matters. A bachelor has no business to know such things; it merely makes him envious and uncomfortable.

Accordingly, "Stella," said I, with firmness, "if you flaunt your connubial felicity in my face like that I shall go home."

She was utterly deaf to my righteous rebuke. "Harry's in Boston," she went on, looking absently into the fire. "I had planned a little dinner for today, but he was compelled to go—business, you know. He's doing so well nowadays," she said, after a little, "that I'm quite proud of him. I intend for him to be a great lawyer—oh,

much the greatest in America. I sha'n't be content till then."

"H'm!" said I. "H'm" seemed fairly non-committal and safe.

"Sometimes," Stella declared, irrelevantly, "I almost wish I had been born a man."

"I wish you had been," quoth I, in gallant wise. "There are so few really attractive men!"

Stella looked up with a smile that was half sad.

"I'm just a little butterfly-woman, aren't I?" she asked.

"You are," I asserted, with conviction, "a butterfly out of a queen's garden—a marvelous pink-and-gold butterfly such as one sees only in dreams and—er—in a London pantomime. You are a decided ornament to the garden," I continued, handsomely, "and the roses bow down in admiration as you pass—er—at least, the masculine ones do," I added, lamely.

"Yes—we butterflies don't love one another over-much, do we? Ah, well, it scarcely matters! We weren't meant to be taken seriously, you know—only to play in the sunlight, and lend an air to the garden and—amuse the roses, of course. After all," Stella summed it up, "our duties are very simple; first, we're expected to pass through a certain number of cotillions and—and a certain number of various happenings in various Winter-gardens; then to make a suitable match—so as to enable the agreeable detrimentals to make love to us, in a faded, half-hearted fashion, with perfect safety—as you were doing just now, for instance. After that, we develop into bulbous chaperons, and may aspire eventually to a kindly quarter of a column in the papers, and, possibly, the honor of having as many as two dinners put off on account of our death. Yes, it's very simple. But, in heaven's name," cried Stella, with a sudden lift of speech, "how can any woman—for, after all, a woman is presumably a reasoning animal—be content with such a life! Yet that's everything—everything!—this big world offers us shallow-minded butterfly-women!"

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Personally, I disapprove of this morbid, hysterical talk outside of a problem novel; there, I approve of it heartily, on account of the considerable and harmless pleasure that is always to be derived from throwing the book into the fireplace. And, coming from Stella, this farrago astounded me. She was talking grave nonsense now, whereas Nature had, beyond doubt, planned her to discuss only the lighter sort. It was absurd, little Stella talking in this fashion—Stella, who, as we all knew, was only meant to be petted and flattered and flirted with. Stella—why, as she herself had said, it was impossible to take Stella seriously! Such a thing was never intended. Such a thing was unthinkable. I had half a mind to laugh outright.

I fancied, however, she was feeling a bit pulled down on this occasion; or, perhaps, staring at the fire had hypnotized her into an unwholesome, morbid state; or—well, at any rate, she was very grave and very queer, and I didn't like it. I preferred her chattering more breezy nonsense, and standing proverbs on their heads.

Therefore, "Stella," I admonished, "you've been reading something indigestible." I set down my teacup, and clasped my hands. "Don't—don't tell me," I pleaded, "that you want to vote!"

She was absurdly grave. "The trouble is," said she, judiciously, "that I am not really a butterfly, for all my tinsel wings. I am an ant."

"Oh," said I, shamelessly, "I hadn't heard! Niece or nephew?"

The pun was bad, I admit. It failed to win a smile or even a reproof from the morbid young person opposite. "My grandfather," said she, in meditation, "began as a clerk in a country-store. Oh, of course, we've discovered since that his ancestors came over with William the Conqueror, and that he was descended from any number of potentates. But he worked—really worked, and was a success; and I fancy I'm prouder of him than I am of any of the emperors and things that make such a fine show in the family tree. For

I am like him. And I want my life to count, too—a hundred years from now I want to be something more than a name on a tombstone. I—oh, I dare say it's only vanity," she ended, with a shrug and her usual quick smile—a smile not always free from insolence, but entirely pleasing, somehow.

"It's late hours," I warned her, with uplifted forefinger, "late hours and too much bridge and too many sweetmeats and too much bothering over silly New Woman ideas. What's the good of a woman's being useful," I demanded, conclusively, "when it's so much easier and so much more agreeable all around for her to be adorable?"

She pouted. "Yes," she assented, "that's my career—to be adorable. It's my one accomplishment," she declared, unblushingly—yet, with some appearance of reason. After a little, though, her gravity returned. "When I was a girl—oh, I dreamed of accomplishing all sorts of beautiful, impossible things! But, you see, there was really nothing I could do. Music, painting, writing—I tried them all, and the results were utterly hopeless. Besides, the women who succeed—the women with any personal achievement to their credit—are always so—so queer-looking. I—I couldn't be expected to give up my complexion for a career, you know, or to wear my hair like a golf-caddy's. At any rate, I couldn't make a success by myself. But there was one thing I could do—I could make a success of Harry. And so," said Stella, calmly, "I did it."

I said nothing. It seemed expedient.

"You know, he was a little——"

"Yes," I assented, hastily. Harry had gone the pace notoriously, of course, but there was no need of raking that up. That was done with, long ago.

"Well, he isn't the least bit dissipated now. You know he isn't. That's the first big thing I've done." Stella checked it off with a pink-tipped finger. "Then—oh, I've helped him in lots of ways. He is doing splendidly in consequence, and—and it's my part to see that the proper people are treated prop-

erly." Stella reflected a moment. "There was that last appointment, for instance. I found that the awarding of it lay with that funny old Judge Willoughby, with the wart on his nose, and I asked him for it—not the wart, you understand—and got it. We simply had him to dinner, and I was specially butterfly; I fluttered airily about, was as silly as I knew how to be, looked helpless and wore my best gown. He thought me a pretty little fool, and gave Harry the appointment. That's only an instance, but it shows how I help." Stella regarded me uncertainly. "You—you understand?"

Of a sudden, I understood a number of things—things that had puzzled me. This was the meaning of Stella's queer dinners, for instance; this was the explanation of those impossible men and of the women condensed in red satin and plastered with gems who frequented the house. Stella, incapable by nature of two consecutive ideas, was determined to become a person of influence, to manipulate unseen wires. Upon my soul, it would have been laughable had her earnestness not been pathetic! It was Columbine mimicking Semiramis, Stella posing to herself as an arbitress of fate.

Yet—yet it was true that Harry had made tremendous strides in his profession, of late years. For a moment, I wondered—then I looked at this butterfly young person opposite and frowned. "I don't like it," said I, decisively. "It's a bit cold-blooded. It—it isn't worthy of you, Stella."

"It's my career," she flouted me, with shrugging shoulders. "It's the one career the world—our world—has left me. And—and I'm doing it for Harry."

The absurd look that I objected to—on principle, understand—returned at this point in the conversation. I arose, resolutely. I was really unable to put up with such folly. Yet, somehow, I was suggesting, idiotically:

"You love him?"

"Of course," she said; "why?"

And—ah, well, it was very easy to see that she did.

"Oh, nothing—nothing in the world," said I, brilliantly. "I—I just thought I would ask, that's all."

Whereupon, I went away.

Stella drove on fine afternoons, under the protection of a trim and preternaturally grave tiger. The next afternoon was fine. As they passed me, I remember wondering in a vague fashion if the boy's lot was not rather enviable. There might well be less attractive professions than to whirl through life behind Stella. One would rarely see her face, of course, but there would be compensations—the sense of her presence, the faint odor of her hair at times, blown scraps of her laughter, shreds of her talk, and, almost always, the piping of the sweet voice that was still so rare. Perhaps the conscienceless tiger listened when she was "seeing that the proper people were treated properly"? Yes, one would. Perhaps he ground his teeth? Well, one would, I fear. Perhaps—?

There was a nod of recognition from Stella, and I lifted my hat as they bowled by toward the Park. I went down the Avenue, mildly resentful that she had not offered me a lift.

A vagrant puff of wind was abroad in the Park that afternoon. It paused for a while to amuse itself with a stray bit of paper. At last, it grew tired of its plaything, and tossed it into the eyes of a sorrel horse. Prince lurched and bolted; and Rex, always a vicious brute, followed his mate. I fancy the vagabond wind must have laughed over that which ensued.

After a little, it returned and lifted the bit of paper from the roadway—with a new respect, perhaps—and frolicked with it over the close-shaven turf. It was a merry game they played there in the Spring sunlight. The paper fluttered a little, whirled over and over, and scampered off through the grass; then, with a gust of mirth, the wind was after it, gained upon it, lost ground in eddying about a tree, made up for it in the open, and at last chuckled over its playmate pinned to

the earth and flapping sharp, indignant protests. Then *da capo*. Oh, it was a merry game—a tireless game that lasted till the angry April sunset had flashed its last palpitant lance through the tree-trunks farther down the roadway. There were people there and broken wheels and shafts, and men were lifting a limp, white heap from among them.

They played half-heartedly in the twilight until the night had grown too chilly for their sport. There was no more murder to be done; and so, the vagrant wind puffed out into nothingness, and the bit of paper was left alone, and the stars—the incurious stars—peered forth one by one.

It was Stella's aunt who sent for me that night. A wheezy hand-organ ground out its jiggling tune below as her brief note told me what the casual wind had brought about. It was a despairing, hopeless, insistent air that shrilled and piped across the way. It seemed very fitting.

The doctors feared—ah, well, telegrams had failed to reach Harry in Boston. Harry was not in Boston, had not been in Boston. He could not be found. Did I think—?

No, I thought none of the things that Stella's aunt suggested. Of a sudden, I knew. I stood silent for a little and heard that damned, clutching tune cough and choke and end; I heard the renewed babblement of children; and I heard the organ clatter down the street, and set up a faint jingling in the distance. And I knew with an unreasoning surety. I pitied Stella now ineffably—not for the maiming and crippling of her body, for the spoiling of that tender miracle, that white flower of flesh—but for the falling of her air-castle, the brave air-castle that to her meant everything. I knew what had happened.

Later, I found Harry—no matter where. The French have a saying of infinite wisdom in their *Qui a bu boira*. The old vice had gripped him irresistibly, and he had stolen off to gratify it in secret—more grossly

worded, he had not been sober for a week. He was on the verge of collapse even when I told him—oh, with deliberate cruelty, I grant you—what had happened that afternoon.

Then, swiftly, the collapse came. I could not—could not for very shame—bring this shivering, weeping imbecile to the bedside of Stella, who was perhaps to die that night. That was the news I brought to Stella's aunt, through desolate streets already blanching in the dawn.

Stella was calling for Harry. We manufactured explanations.

Nice customs curtsy to death. I am standing at Stella's bedside, and the white-capped nurse has gone. There are dim lights about the room, and heavy carts lumber by in the dawn without. A petulant sparrow is cheeping somewhere.

"Tell me the truth," says Stella, pleadingly. Her face, showing over billows of bed-clothes, is as pale as they. But beautiful—exceedingly beautiful is Stella's face now that she is come to die.

It heartened me to lie to her. Harry had been retained in the great Western Railroad case. He had been called to Denver, San Francisco—I forget where. He had kept it as a surprise for her. He was hurrying back now. He would arrive in two days. I showed her telegrams from him—clumsy forgeries I had concocted in the last half-hour.

Oh, the story ran lamely, I grant you. But, vanity apart, I told it convincingly. Stella must and should die in content. My thoughts were strangely nimble, there was a devilish fluency in my speech, and lie after lie fitted somehow into an entity that surprised even me as it took plausible form. And I had my reward. Little by little, the doubt died from her eyes as I lied stubbornly in the hushed silence; little by little, her cheeks flushed brighter, ever brighter, as I dilated on this wonderful success that had come to Harry, till at last her face was all aflame with hap-

piness. Ah, she knew! She had dreamed of this, had worked for this for months past. But she had hardly dared hope for this much; she could not be certain even now whether it was the soup or her blue silk that had influenced Musgrave most potently. Both had been planned to wheedle him, to gain this glorious chance for Harry. Dear Harry!

"You—you are sure you're not lying?" said Stella, and smiled as she spoke. She believed me infinitely.

"Stella, before God, it's true!" I lied, with fervor. "On my word of honor, it's as I tell you!" And my heart was sick within me as I thought of the stuttering brute, the painted female, the stench of liquor in the room—Ah, well, the God I called to witness strengthened me to smile back at Stella.

"I believe you," she said, simply. "I—I'm glad. It's a big thing for Harry." Her eyes widened in wonder and pride, and she dreamed for a moment of his brave future. But, of a sudden, her face fell. "Dear, dear!" said Stella, petulantly; "I forgot. I shall be dead by then."

"Stella! Stella!" I cried, hoarsely; "why—why, nonsense, child! The doctor says—he is sure—" I had a horrible desire to laugh. It all seemed so grotesque.

"Ah, I know," she interrupted me. "I—I'm a little afraid to die," she went on, reflectively. "If one only knew—" Stella paused for a moment; then she smiled. "After all," she said, "it isn't as if I hadn't accomplished anything. I—I've made Harry. The ball's at his feet now; he has only to kick it. And—and I helped."

"Yes," said I. Oh, I grant you, my voice was shaken, broken out of all control. "You've helped. Why, you've done it all, Stella! There isn't a young man in America with his prospects. In five years, he'll be one of our greatest lawyers—everybody says so—everybody! And you've done it all, Stella—every bit of it! You've made a man of him, I tell you!

Look at what he was!—look at what he is! And—and you talk of leaving him now! Why, it's preposterous! Harry needs you, I tell you—needs you to cajole the proper people and keep him steady and—and— Why, you artful young woman, how could he possibly get on without you, do you think? How—how could any of us get on without you? You *must* get well, I tell you! In—in a month, you'll be right as a trivet. You die! Why—why, nonsense!" I laughed. I feared I would never have done with laughing over the idea of Stella's dying.

"I've done all I could. He doesn't need me now." Stella thought for a moment. "I think I shall know when he does anything especially big," she went on, after consideration. "God would be sure to tell me, you see, because He understands how much it means to me. And I shall be proud—ah, yes, wherever I am, I shall be proud of Harry. You see, he didn't really care about being a success. But I'm such a vain little cat—so bent on making a noise in the world—that, I think, he did it more to please my vanity than anything else. I nagged him, frightfully, you know," Stella confessed, with frankness, "but he was always patient. And he has never failed me—not once, though I know at times it was very hard for him—" Stella sighed, and then laughed. "Yes," said she, "I think I'm satisfied with my life altogether. Somehow, I am sure I shall know when he's a power in the world—a power for good, as he will be—and then I shall know my life counted for something. For I shall have helped. So I ought to sing *Nunc Dimittis*, oughtn't I? Yes—I think I'm quite satisfied," Stella ended, judicially, and laughed again.

I? Oh, yes, I was making an ass of myself. I have half a mind to do so now as I think of Stella and how gaily she went to meet her death.

"Good-bye," said she, after a little, in a tired voice.

"Good-bye, Stella," said I. And I kissed her for the second time.

A woman in mourning—mourning fluffed and furbelowed and jetted in a pleasing fashion that seemed mutely to beseech consolation of all marriageable males—viewed me with a roving eye this morning as I heaped daffodils on Stella's grave. I fancy she thought me sanctioned by church and law in what I had done—viewed me in my supposed recent bereavement and gauged my potentialities—viewed me, in short, with the glance of resigned and adventurous widowhood.

My faith, if she had known!—if I had spoken my thought to her!

"Madame"—let us imagine me, my hat raised, my voice grave—"the woman who lies here was a stranger to me. I did not know her. I knew that her eyes were very blue, that her hair was sunlight, that her voice had certain pleasing modulations; but I did not know the woman. And she cared nothing for me. I have brought her daffodils, because of all flowers she loved them chiefly, and because there is no one else who remembers this. It is the flower of Spring, and Stella—for that was her name, madame—died in the Spring of the year, in the Spring of her life; and daffodils, madame, are all white and gold, even as that handful of dust beneath us was when we buried it with a great flourish of crêpe and lamentation, just two years since. Yet the dust here was tender flesh at one time, and it clad a brave heart; but we thought of it—I among the rest—as only a costly plaything with which some lucky man might while away his leisure hours. I believe now that it was something more. I believe—ah, well, my *credo* is of little consequence. But whatever this woman may have been, I did not know her."

I should like to do it. I can imagine the stare, the squawk, the rustling furbelows, as madame flees from this grave madman. She would probably have me arrested.

You see, I have come to think differently of Stella. At times, I remember her childish vanity, her childish, morbid views, her childish gusts of petulance and anger and mirth; and I smile—tenderly, yet I smile.

Then comes the memory of Stella and myself in that ancient moonlight and our first talk of death—two infants peering into infinity, somewhat afraid, somewhat puzzled; of Stella making tea in the firelight, and prattling of her heart's secrets, half-seriously, half in fun; of Stella striving to lift a very worthless man to a higher level and succeeding—yes, for the time, succeeding; of Stella dying with a light heart, elate with vain dreams of Harry's future and of "a life that counted"; and, irrationally enough, perhaps, there seems a sequence somewhere—a whiff of tragedy, faint yet pungent. And I picture her, a foiled, wistful little wraith, very lonely in eternity, regretful of the world she loved and of its absurd men, unhappy—for she could never be entirely happy without Harry—and, I fear, indignant; for Stella desired very heartily to be remembered—she was very vain, you know—and we have all forgotten. Yes, I am quite sure that even as a wraith, Stella would be indignant, for she had a fine sense of her own merits.

"But I'm just a little butterfly-woman," she would say, sadly; then, with a quick smile, "aren't I?" And her eyes would be like stars—like big, blue stars—and afterward, her teeth would glint of a sudden, and innumerable dimples would come into being, and I would know she was never meant to be taken seriously.

Heigho! let us avoid all sickly sentiment.

You see, the world has advanced

since Stella died—twice around the sun, from solstice to solstice, from Spring to Winter and back again, traveling through I forget how many millions of miles; and there have been wars and scandals and a host of débutantes and any number of dinners; and, after all, the world is for the living. So we agreed unanimously that it was very sad; and the next week Emily Van Orden ran away with Tom Whately; and a few days later Alicia Wade's husband died, and we debated whether or no Teddy Anstruther would do the proper thing; and, in due course, we forgot Stella, just as Stella would have forgotten us.

And I? Well, I was very fond of Stella. It would be good to have her back—to have her back to jeer at me, to make me feel red and uncomfortable and ridiculous, to say rude things about my waist, to bedevil me in divers ways. Yes, it would be good. But, upon the whole, I am not sorry that Stella is gone.

For there is Harry to be considered. We can all agree that Harry is a good fellow, that he is making the most of Stella's money while it lasts, and that he is nobody's enemy but his own; but, I fancy, we have forgotten the time when we expected him to become a great lawyer. We don't expect that of Harry now; and we say, some of us, that he is nearing the end of his tether. At any rate, Harry is now in England, where his infatuation for Paquita—you may recall her as the dancer who boxed a royal ear not long ago—is tolerably notorious. And as Stella loved him—

Well, as it was, I took the daffodils to Stella. She was always vain, was Stella; it would have grieved her, had no one remembered.



SHE OWED HER ONE

MISS PASSÉE—I should like to see a young man try to kiss me.
Miss YOUNG—You cruel thing!

THE UNPOSSESSED

MY Heart's Desire hath led me
Through barren lands and vain,
And bitter bread she fed me,
And bade me drink of pain.
Ah, me! I climbed a weary way
To heights of her disdain,
Yet would I give the years I live
To walk the path again.

The Heart's Possessed beside me
Leads me a level way;
There may no ill betide me,
No thirst or famine stay.
She hath no wish but wish of mine,
No joy save to obey,
And at my side her form must bide
Until my dying day.

My Heart's Possessed hath stilled me
From all unrest malign;
Yea, eased the hope that thrilled me
With too keen pain and fine.
Yet, O my Heart, my Heart's Desire,
My ungained dream divine,
That never turned the while I yearned
Nor closed her hands in mine!

HELEN SCOTT.



EDUCATIONAL ITEM

"HAVE you heard the latest educational item?" asked Biggs.
"No," replied Wiggs; "what is it?"

"They have just decided," said Biggs, "to rewrite the primer in words of five syllables for Boston children."



REGGIE'S CONCLUSION

"OH, mama!" shouted Little Reggie, as he ran to his mother in great glee,
"what do you think? I was just over there where they're putting up
the circus, and they're filling the ring all full of breakfast food."

ABSORPTION

BELOVED, in the still deeps of thine eyes
 Absorb my soul, that I may know no more
 The pain of separation! I implore
 Thy Self to take me in, and solemnize
 My union with thee in some mystic wise.
 I would no more be I, but would explore,
 As thee, thy soul's dim temple, and adore
 Therein, as thee, with secret sacrifice.

Oh, let me die to Self, and find rebirth
 In some fair body as one soul with thee!
 There are no purposes in life for me,
 But as thy complement; nor any worth
 In all the fame and splendor of the earth—
 Unless one perfect spirit we may be.

ELSA BARKER.



JUST SO

MRS. HOON—Mrs. Kidder's baby fell out of a second-story window yesterday,
 and wasn't hurt a bit. Doesn't that seem strange?

MR. HOON—Well, I don't know. Perhaps it is a bouncing boy.



THE COMMON FATE

DAN CUPID limped into his office,
 All battered and bruised was his head;
 A bandage and splints graced his person—
 "I umpired a love-match," he said.



DARWINIAN

FIRST MONKEY—It seems to be a toss-up whether man is descended from
 us.

SECOND MONKEY—Yes, it's heads, they win; tails, we win.

HANDSOME JACK

By Elias Lisle

WHEN Handsome Jack first struck the old Skopa Ranch, the boys didn't just take to him. In the first place, he was a stranger. In the second place, he was a swell—no missing that. Then he looked about as chummy as a rattleweed. Nobody knew his name; nobody knew where he came from; nobody knew how he got his place, or why, or how long he'd stick—or nothing. One thing was sure, though—he was onto his job, even if we weren't onto him. A girl down at Red Bottle nicknamed him Handsome Jack one day, and the outfit took it up because the name fitted. We had to call him something, and he wasn't the sort of guy you can say "Here you!" to, or whistle when you want him. Some of the ladies at the station thought he was, but they found out pretty quick he didn't know they were alive. That was another queer thing about him—until we learned.

It was Limbo Aleck that first made Jack solid with the boys. He rolled in from the highlands one day, with the red liquor inside showin' pink through his skin.

"Well, well, well!" he says, sizin' Jack up. "Who knocked that off the parlor mantel?"

Nobody said nothing, and Jack didn't make a move.

"Finished real delicate, ain't he?" Aleck pursued. "Where's the plush-lined box you came in, Marmaduke?"

Jack was just as thoughtful as a lizard in the sunshine. Accourse, Aleck had ought to have knowed that any man with the nerve to sit still and take that without a quiver is to

be approached with caution. But Aleck was nothin' but a megaphone for the Old Booze to holler through. He ground out a few more observations; then, over he goes and pats Jack on the head real patronizing-like. Aleck's hand weighs about twenty pounds, and his manners are mighty ornery when he wants to make 'em. Jack was real put out. He got up and swatted Aleck one in the jaw that would have knocked his head lopsided, if he hadn't swatted him the mate to it in the other jaw to set it on straight again. Talk about sinking softly to rest! Aleck stretched out so comfortable he didn't wake up for near an hour. Did he apologize? Not just exactly. Couldn't, because he had to wear his jaw in a sling for a week, and by that time the scrap was outlawed.

Naturally, we all treated Handsome Jack some considerate after that, particularly as we'd already made out that he could ride more than a few, and that his gun-record was in the Handle-with-care class. Only for one thing he'd 'a' been mighty popular: he was so blame' reserved!—never said a word about his own affairs. Yes, sir, he was a sure-enough shy and shrinking violet when it came to anything about himself. Why, he shot as pretty a hole as you ever saw through Dutch Peter's left ear, because Dutch asked him what brand he wore when he was on the home ranch. Dutch said it was a pretty tart answer to what was meant for a civil question, but he never laid it up against Jack. They got to be good friends, after a

while, and right up to the finish, if Jack spoke to Dutch on the side of the frilled ear, Dutch'd turn around the other way, and say:

"Try it on this side, old man. That one's kinder sore on you yet."

It was Dutch that was along with me the day *she* came. We'd rode down to meet the train, and get a line on some overdue express, and, while we were collecting explanations from the conductor, there was a little stir down where the one passenger car stood, and a woman got off. You could tell in a second by her gait and style that she was blooded stock.

"Lord Harry!" says Dutch. "What's *that* doin' in this apology for hell?" he says. Don't go thinking now that Red Bottle ain't as nice a little berg as need be, with four places where you can get first-class liquor, and a faro game with French plate mirrors. But it *did* look kind of mean and shabby, with her for a centre-piece. And she was some flam-gasted, too, lookin' around kind of uncertain and helpless. We had a chance to size her up good—and we did. Says I to Dutch:

"Well, I'll be everlastingly——"

"Same here," he says, interrupting. Then he took another look, and he says, "That's the only job God ever did that's better than Handsome Jack."

Now, Dutch is a gentleman all right, and he means well, but his bazoo ain't always tuned as sweet and low as a Summer zephyr, and the lady must have heard at least part of what he said, for there was a kind of smile in her eyes as she walked right up to us.

"Are you from the Skopa Ranch?" she says, and her voice was the last finishing touch to make a man want to lie right down in the dust before her.

"Ye-yes, ma'am," says Dutch, taking off his hat. I was standing like a locoed colt staring at her, till Dutch, who was strong on genteelness, twists his mouth sideways, and growls at me:

"Shake that head-bag, you Kiyote, or I'll shoot it off."

By the time I got my hat stuffed into my shirt-front, I began to come to, and realize that the lady wanted to find somebody at the ranch.

"How does one get there?" she asked.

"You climb onto a bronc, ma'am," says I, eager to please, "an' hike like——"

"Shut up!" snorts Dutch. "It's a good twenty-five miles, ma'am," he says to her.

"Can't I get a carriage, a cart—anything to take me?"

"No rolling stock short of the ranch," says Dutch, "except the ticket-agent's bicycle. Limbo Aleck shot a hole in the tire of that last week, to see what kind of wind was inside."

"I want to find some one—a friend," she says, after a minute. "I heard you speak of Handsome Jack. Is he—? What is his other name?"

"There's his autograph, ma'am," says Dutch, turning his lone-star ear toward her. "That's as near as any one here ever came to finding out his name."

"Oh, it's a dog, then," she said, disappointed. "And he bit you there?"

"I'd hate to call him that, ma'am, exceptin' by cable," Dutch replies. "And he didn't bite me, he shot me."

"I'm sure it's not Eric," she said, looking rather startled. "He wouldn't be so murderous."

"It ain't murder in this country to shoot a man's ear off, miss," I put in. "And, as for Eric, Jack looks like that might be his real name."

"What does he look like?" she asked, eagerly. "Is he tall and dark with a brown mustache——?"

"Beggin' your pardon, lady," says Dutch, "if you was a little darker you'd be a marker for his sister, wouldn't she, Simon?"

"No, not that," she says, very quiet; but the color came up in her face, so I was sorry for her. I wanted to kick Dutch, but I held in on her account. Maybe she'd 'a' thought it wasn't polite. "Tell me more about him," says she.

"Well, he's medium tall," I says, "with small hands and a hell of a grip—Ow! - Oh!"

"Yes, yes," she says, eager. "Please don't interrupt him," she says to Dutch, so severe that I bet he was sorry he jolted me in the stomach.

"Slim built, and a swell, I guess," cuts in Dutch, while I was swallowin' breeze. "Oh, and he's got a big scar over his right temple."

"It's Eric!" she says, with a gasp. "Take me to him. No; I must be sure. You'll go ahead, won't you, and ask him if he's Eric?"

"Excuse me!" says Dutch, rubbing his bum ear. "Curiosity ain't my besettin' sin, ma'am."

"Nor courtesy," she cries, flashing a look at him. But, in a second, she put her hand on his arm. "I'm sorry," she says. "You've been very good, both of you."

"Oh, hell!" Dutch busts out. "What's an ear or two between friends? I'll do it. Take my horse, ma'am, and I'll borrow one."

All the way out, her talk was like the singing of a Spring robin, until we neared the ranch. Then she quieted down. It was Handsome Jack's night trick that day, and I figured Dutch wouldn't have to risk his features, for we'd just about catch him coming up from the river after his swim. So we did. As we rode up the rise he come over the top of it. She gave a little cry that fluttered in her throat, and rode ahead.

"Laddy!" she says; "my Laddy!"

I never knew a full-grown man could fall off a horse asleep or awake, but Jack came near to it then.

"Helen!" he says, with a great ring of joy in his voice; but his face was like a sick man's.

"Laddy," she says again, "I've come—I had to."

He was off his horse, and beside her.

"And where is *he*?" Jack says, looking at her hard. She made a gesture like throwing away something worthless. "You must go back," he says. "This is no place for you. I can't look after you. I'm on duty to-night. My

God, Helen, why did you come to torture me?"

Down she slipped from the saddle, and put her two hands on Jack's shoulder. They were the two most beautiful creatures I ever laid eyes on. For them, there was nobody else in the world just then, I reckon.

"There's a picture," I remarks to Dutch.

"Yes, but not for us to rubber at. We've got a date to size up the sunset from down by the river-bed. Hike along!"

Dutch was a sure-enough gentleman, even if he was a little slow about it. We hiked, but, as we went along, I heard her voice, with the thrill of music in it, say:

"I'll ride out with you to-night, Eric; and, to-morrow——"

It was early the next morning that Dutch and I met her. There was something changed about her. Her voice was softer, and her face was between joy and sadness, so that you couldn't tell which it was. She rode up to us, and asked us could we ride back to the train with her. All the way she was very silent, yet, some way, I felt as if we had sort of become friends; as near as might be between a beautiful, high-toned woman like that and two rough ones like Dutch and me. At the station, she took our hands, one in each of her little ones, and she says:

"When we are happy, some day, he and I, you are to come and see us. I want you to remember me always."

Then, she handed Dutch a little parcel. "If you don't hear from me within a week, give it to him for me. Good-bye."

Within a week she said, so she couldn't have known what was coming. On the way back, we found Jack's body. He must have shot himself as soon as she left. Dutch sat down and cried like a baby. He was for riding back to Red Bottle, and sending telegrams and things to her—which was a wild idea, considering we didn't know her name, let alone her address.

We buried Handsome Jack, without any name on his tombstone—for a good reason. Maybe we could have got one from the packet she gave us. I wanted Dutch to open it, but he wouldn't have it.

"No," he said; "you know how reserved Jack was. If he was here and seen me open it, like as not he'd shoot my other ear off. No, he didn't want no name, and he ain't going to get none. We'll just bury the package with him."

And we did.

Three weeks later, Dutch and I had got hold of a newspaper and split it. I'd got first draw, and was reading the matrimonial advertisements, when I heard Dutch cuss kind of constrained and unnatural. There he stood, staring at the paper he held, with a twisted face.

"Anything wrong at home, Dutch?" I asked.

"No," he said. The paper dropped out of his hands. I picked it up and handed it to him. He was all in.

"Simon," he says, "the Princess!" Did I tell you that we'd called her that when we talked about her? It seemed to fit as well as the other name fitted him.

"What about her? You've found out who she is?"

With his finger on a big, splurgy head-line, he handed me the paper. The piece told of the death of a big railroad official's wife, supposedly from brain fever following a shock, "soon after a mysterious trip to Montana." I looked at Dutch. He nodded his head.

"It's her," he said.

For a minute, it froze me cold. To

think of Handsome Jack lying out there alone by the riverside, and the Princess, she that seemed all made of beauty and music and warm colors and happiness, dying right after it!

"Dutch!" says I—and to save me I couldn't keep my voice steady—

"Dutch, I feel like I'd lost money!"

"How did he ever send her away?" says Dutch, like a man arguing with somebody. "How could he have the nerve, and her with that pleadin' look in her eyes? Why, I never could have done it in God's wide, green world! Jack must have been made of chilled steel. He killed her when he killed himself."

"But ain't it a queer game?" I says, "her dying that way without knowing of his death? Maybe she did know. Looks like one of those fancy mind-reading games——"

"Looks like fancy hell!" says Dutch. "She knew it from the letter I took off his body, and mailed to her."

"I didn't see you take any letter."

"You wasn't meant to."

"Then you knew her name right along?"

"Simon," says Dutch, "I don't know her name, and I never did know it, and never will. I've forgotten all about it. See? So have you. And, if you ever get a hunch that you haven't, I'll shoot your damned head so full of holes you can use it for a sieve."

Dutch certainly had a mighty emphatic way about him some folks mightn't like; but I reckon he was right. He's a gentleman, Dutch is; and I'll back him to know what's the square thing. I never did have much of a memory for names, anyway.



HE EXPLAINS

"**L**AKESIDE has two single daughters and an unmarried one."

"Why the distinction?"

"The unmarried one is divorced."

OFF WITH THE OLD

By Edward Boltwood

AT the door of the Brookeses' house, my balance of resolution was thrown out of adjustment by old Mason, who turned the knob. Butlers should be changed every decade; deliver me, for one, from the ancient family servant. Mason grinned respectfully.

"Mr. Robert," he purred, as if I were in college.

"I have not seen you for a long time, Mason," I said, stiffly. "Is Miss Agatha at—?"

Now, I had carefully schemed to use her last name.

"If you will wait in the drawing-room, Mr. Rob." And Mason was gone.

So I crossed the threshold with my plan of campaign ruffled. Even the butler had done his best to set me at once on the old and dangerous plane of intimacy.

In the drawing-room, the Brookes *penates* served the same disturbing purpose. I recognized, for example, a porcelain shepherd and his shepherdess, about whom Agatha and I joked the Winter before she came out. I caught myself hunting for friends and finding them—a twisted candelabrum, a miniature of Aunt Juliana, a carved chair with ingenious spikes to stick into your spine. Really, how absurd it was that, after so prolonged a residence in Europe, the Brookeses should return to New York with this painfully familiar bric-à-brac!

The clock on the mantel began to sound five. It used to catch on the third tinkle, and was invariably a quarter fast—at least, so Agatha claimed whenever she was late for an

appointment with me, which was often. One, two, and now the third stroke jangled. I sighed, and consulted my watch. The clock was fifteen minutes ahead of time.

However, I carry a portrait of Susan inside my watch-case. The habit is commonplace, but comforting. Accordingly, I looked at Susan and was comforted. The thing had to be done, somehow. There was a flurry of the portières.

"Rob!" Agatha gave me her hands, and, naturally, I took them—both of them. She has extremely nice hands. We sat down. I secured the chair with the spikes.

"You see, I lost no time in coming, Agatha. I took you at your word."

"Of course."

"Of course?" Already, I was clutching at the conventional straw of reminiscence. "You once hated people who took you at your word—'duff-muffs,' I think you called them."

Agatha laughed, crinkling her eyes. "I do still; but in this case, it's different."

A man is sensible to be on guard when Agatha crinkles her eyes.

"In this case," she went on, "you knew that I am quite as anxious to see you as you are to see me—and more so, probably."

"Did you like Mentone?" I demanded, sternly.

"Not in the least," said Agatha. "But Mentone liked me, which was more important, on the whole."

"Mentone is human." This would not do; it was necessary, at any cost, to play the brother. "Mentone liked

you because you are clever," I explained, pompously, "and good."

"One must be clever to stay good in Mentone. Then there were St. Petersburg and Buda-Pesth and the Isle of Wight. We yote from Gib to Alexandria."

"Yote?"

"Past tense of verb, 'to yacht.' And I think you might have written me."

"Quite true," I assented. "But if I had, I would have nothing to tell you now."

"Well!" Agatha's scorn was as charming as ever. "You are telling me absolutely nothing, as it is."

"True again." And I thought desperately of Susan.

"Why don't you recite some of those unwritten letters?"

"That's a fine scheme," said I, meditating. It was an excellent scheme, but the trouble was that I had rehearsed an entirely different method of imparting the news. However, "Dear Agatha—" I began, and balked.

"Expressive," she commented, encouragingly, "but brief. I presume you would have cabled it. What was the date of that letter?"

"I haven't finished. The date is a year ago."

"We were in Derbyshire with three dukes. Proceed, sir."

"Dear Agatha: I am sure you are not changed a bit."

"You can be positive," she interpolated, dropping her delightful, brown eyelashes.

My heart also dropped for the fraction of a trifle. Could it be possible that she still imagined that she—?

"Don't interrupt," I advised. "To continue: 'I am sure you are not changed a bit. I am not changed, either.'"

"What on earth could change us?" asked Agatha.

"Well, an auto accident," I suggested, boorishly.

"I'm serious. Rob, we have always been such reliable chums!"

She reached out an impulsive hand.

My backbone became panicky, or was it the carving on the chair? At all events, I shifted to the divan beside her.

"Dear Agatha!" I exclaimed.

"Another letter?" said she, innocently.

"Chums is the very word I want to talk about. Suppose something should happen to make a difference in that?"

She raised her eyes, and frowned straight at me. I did not know where to look, and so I looked at Agatha. Whereupon, she frowned the harder and the more becomingly.

"Pay attention to me," she directed.

"Ah, who wouldn't?" said I.

"Rob, dear—" her tone altered to what I used to call her stained-glass voice—"Rob, you make me think that we must understand things together as we never did before. Oh, why can't we be children always? There never was any difficulty about understanding then. Can't we be wise now, like children—in spite of the nonsense that is bound to come, I suppose, to every man—and woman?"

Involuntarily, my fingers pushed themselves into my pocket and around the watch.

"Your letter is unfinished," hinted Miss Brookes.

"Yes—"Yours faithfully, Robert Cryder," I concluded.

"Rather terse," she pronounced, critically. "Nevertheless, I have a sweet disposition, and I shall answer it."

Agatha dominated a dusky corner of the divan. She was molded into a gown of a sort of bluish gray or grayish blue—well, I haven't much of a notion about her gown, for the reason that her face was sufficient to engage the entire attention of any number of men from one to a million. Of course, I realized before that Agatha was beautiful, but now— Ah, Susan, Susan!

Agatha commenced her fanciful letter soberly, leaning forward so that a sunbeam fell on the bronze hair.

"Dear Robert: No matter how many new people I meet, I remember my most perfect pal."

"Thank you," I acknowledged; "but dare I put it—sententious?"

"Did you say sentimental?" cried Agatha.

"I did not," I replied, loftily. "Sentimental, indeed!"

Agatha held me for a second in her eyes. "Sentiment is part of the nonsense that's bound to happen," she murmured, and turned her head.

It seemed incredible, but there was a tear in her voice. And, hang it all, why did she look shivery and pitiful, as if she needed to be kissed? Heaven knows I couldn't kiss her! Disaster was ever the result of this confessional business. I swung nearer to Agatha on the divan.

"There are worse things than sentiment," said I. Now that the time had come, I croaked like a raven, just as I expected. "I've been sentimental in your absence—irredeemably sentimental."

She made a little gesture of protest.

"I mean it, Agatha. Sentimental in altogether a new way."

"Must you go on?" There were real tears in her eyes now.

"I'm afraid so. Last Summer, I found a spot in my heart I didn't suspect before. It had been covered up by stuff that doesn't count. Am I to blame? And the finding of it changed all of my life for me, except our friendship; it——"

Agatha took a long breath, and squared her shoulders.

"You can't go on, dear," she said, gently.

"Why not? I must tell you. I came to-day on purpose to tell you. It is best for both of us to get it over with."

She glanced at me more softly and more pitifully than is imaginable.

"Rob, I am engaged to be married," said Agatha.

"Oh, may the good Lord deliver us!" I ejaculated, piously. "So am I."

For the instant, we were not less petrified than the shepherd and his sweetheart on the mantel. Then, Agatha pounded her knee three times in an exceedingly vulgar fashion.

"I am glad," she gasped, and laughed until her cheeks were wet.

"That's evident," I observed, as soon as I could observe anything. "When you are through being so violently glad, I'll congratulate you."

"But I was afraid to tell you," she panted, groping for her handkerchief. "Afraid it might hurt you! How did I know what notions you might have about our old affection? Rob, why didn't you speak of your engagement the first minute I came into this room?"

"Who is he?" I temporized.

"Who is she?" retorted Agatha.

But I maintained a discreet silence while she related glowing particulars about Sir Gilbert Stratton, after which Agatha listened sympathetically to my Susanic rhapsody.

I had managed to do pretty well, considering. The credit, however, was perhaps not entirely mine.

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SPURNED by the foot, its mystery blows,
 Dust of the galley, dust of a king,
 Of lover who sang love's deathless rose—
The laughter of Time is a silent thing.

Dust of the lute and of lips that are dead;
 Golden lily and flowering quince,
 Pain forgotten and passion fled,
 Hearts that have loved and wept long since.

Seed of the mold and of winding-sheet,
 Grain of gold from a crumbled crown,
 Myrrh and aloe and time-spent sweet—
 Dust, on a breath of the East blown down.

Snared in a web of wind and of sun,
 Mingle and mix they, serf and king,
 Sceptre and sceptre at last are one—
The laughter of Time is a silent thing.

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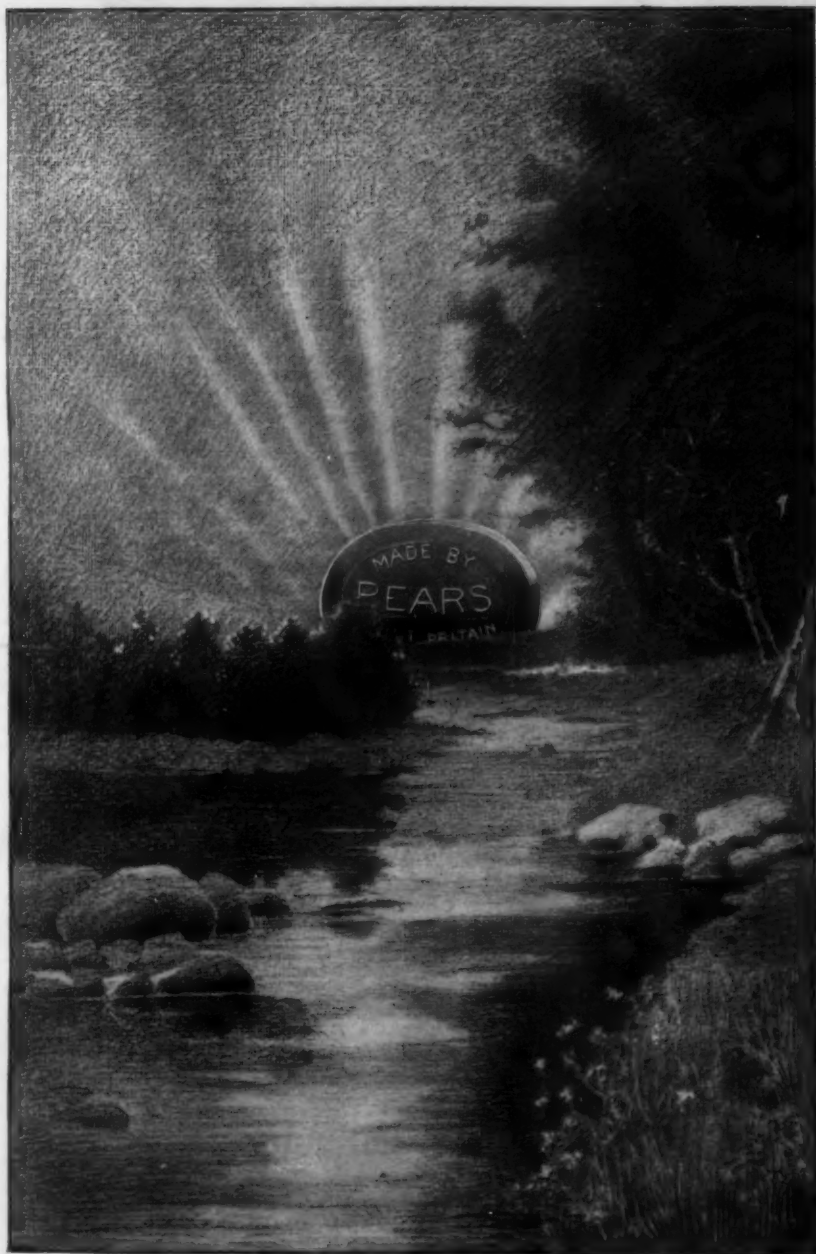


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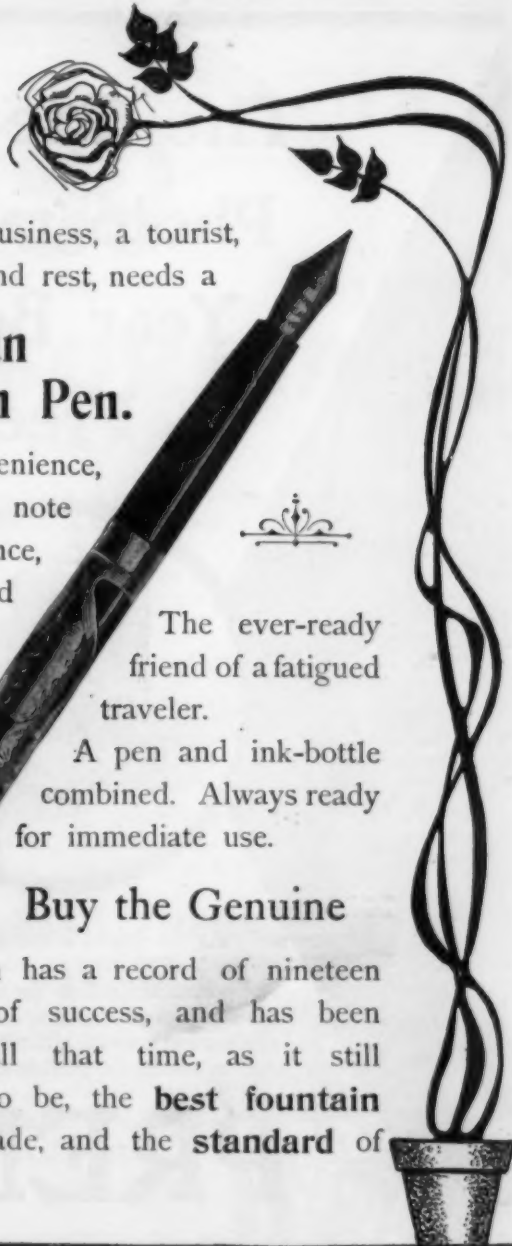
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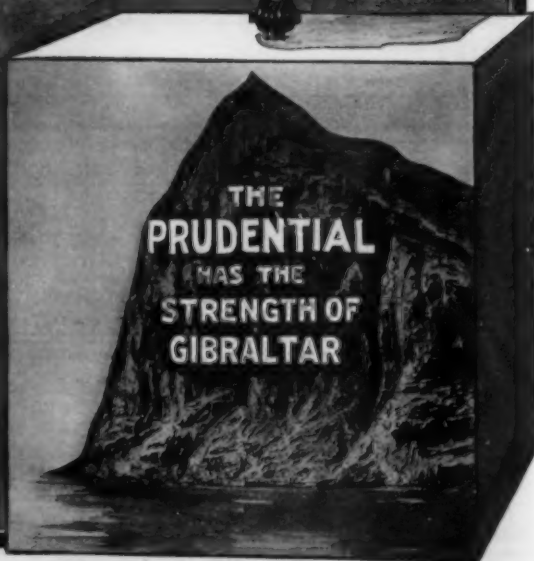
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Select crisp stalks of celery, and fill each piece with soft cream cheese rubbed to a paste with butter.

Bread Cases may be made of thick rounds of bread hollowed out, brushed with soft butter and browned in the oven.

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BY

LEE S. OVITT



NO need for the investor of to-day, who is seeking a Gold Mine Investment, to go astray.

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I have been one of those who persistently cautioned my public to look before they leapt.

And the result has been that to-day I have the confidence of thousands who have invested with me, because of the preliminary work of investigation which they did at my instigation.

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Now then, in the face of the returns, in spite of the remarkable showing by the Cracker-Oregon, I am predicting that its blood relation, "Cracker Jack," will prove a richer gold producer.

I could go into details here and tell you the why and wherefore, but my space is limited. The prospectus does it better, and to that matter-of-fact book I shall leave the telling of the story of the Cracker Jack.

This much I know. If I have as good a proposition as I contend, *you want some stock.* I have never sold any stock that sold so easily, but that is only natural, perhaps, as the Cracker-Oregon has acted as a blazed trail that pointed the way. Those who failed to buy that good stock when it was cheap are not letting a second opportunity go by.

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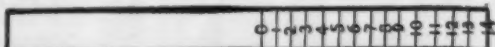
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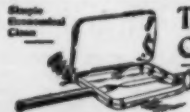
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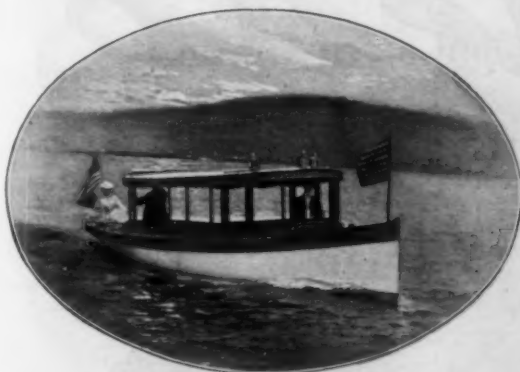
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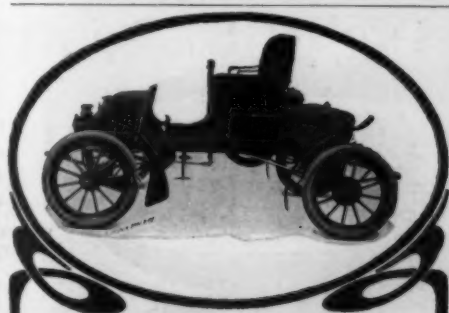
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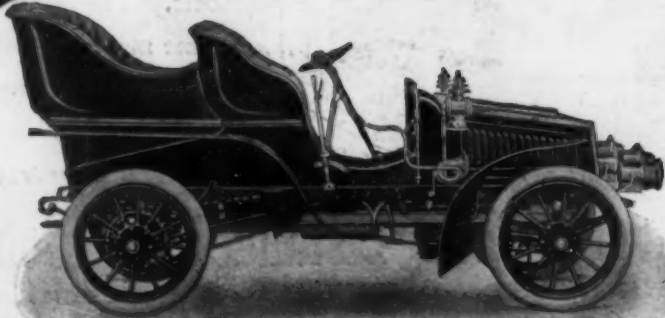
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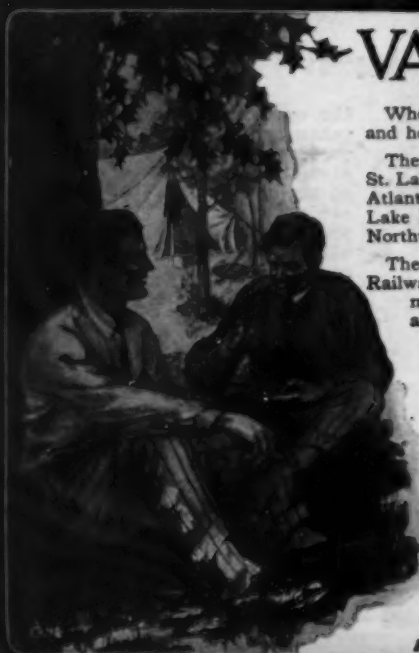
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| | | Feb. 1903. | THE WOOING OF MARCUS, - - - | By G. B. BURGIN |
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Vol. X

JUNE, 1903

No. 2

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*The July number of THE SMART SET will contain:
"The Metempsychosis of the Ogdens," by Edward S. Van Zile*

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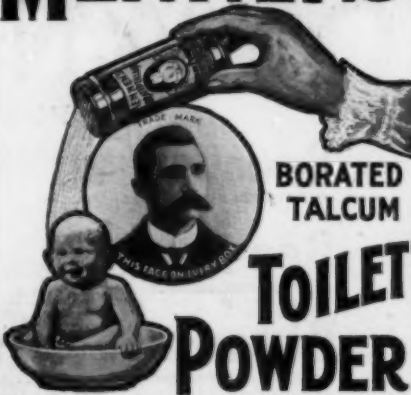
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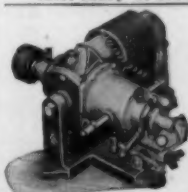
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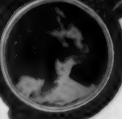
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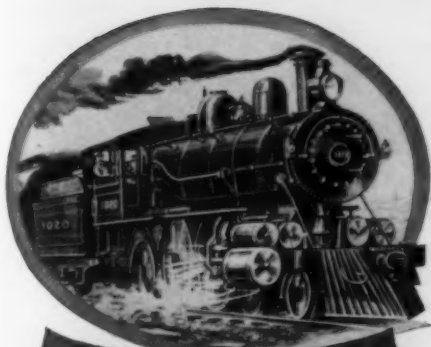
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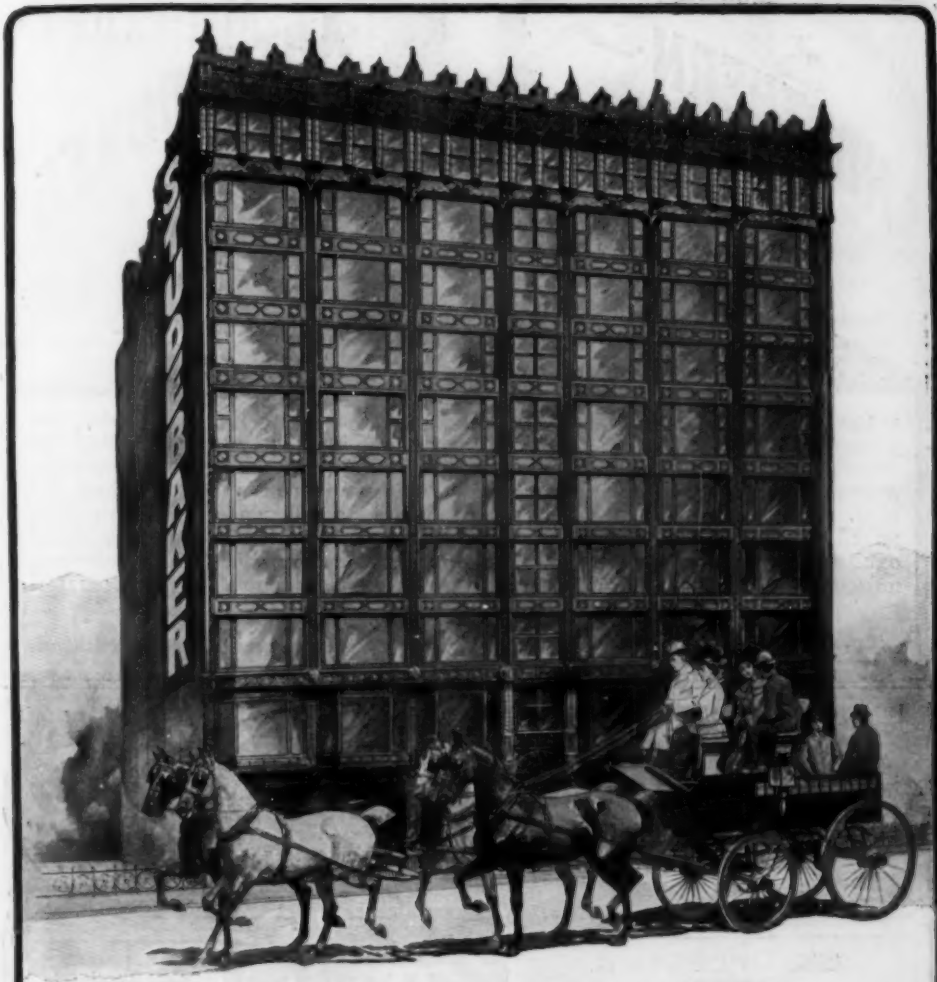
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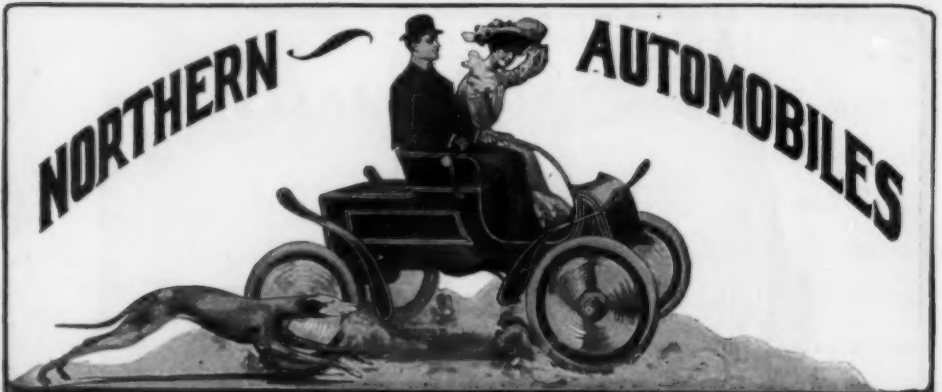
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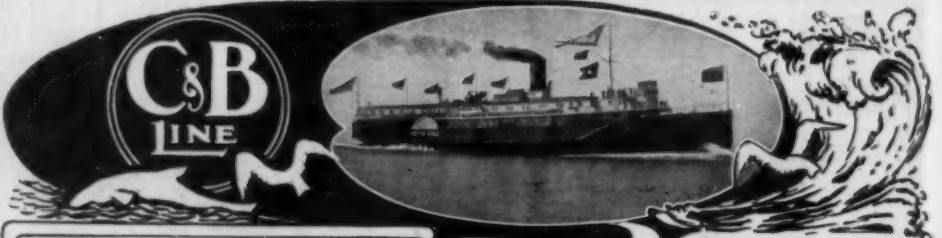
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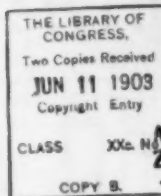
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THE SMART SET OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. X

JULY, 1903

No. 3

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*The August number of THE SMART SET will contain:
" Sylvia's Husband," by Mrs. Burton Harrison*

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*Among the other contributors to the August number will be: Gertrude Atherton, Brander Matthews,
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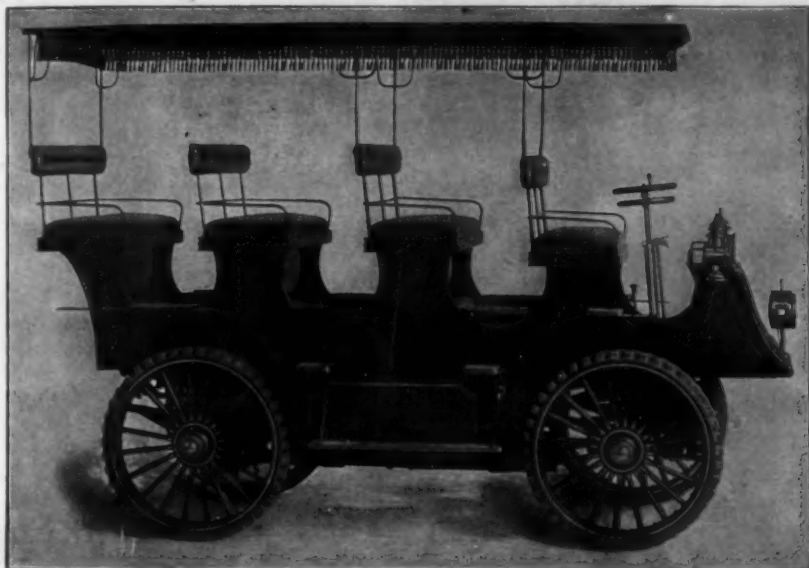
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It is easily applied: **COLORS** are **DURABLE** and **NATURAL**; when applied cannot be detected; is unaffected by baths, shampooing or **SEA BATHING**; permits curling and leaves the hair soft and glossy. It is equally good for the beard and moustache.

Sample of your hair colored free. Correspondence confidential. The **IMPERIAL HAIR REGENERATOR** is sold by Druggists. Applied by Hair-dressers everywhere, or sent direct, express charges prepaid.

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It's So Convenient

No cup needed.
Just wet your face, rub on a little soap, work up a big, creamy lather with your brush and you'll shave with ease and pleasure.
Nothing like it.

Williams' Shaving Stick sold by all druggists, etc.
THE J. B. WILLIAMS CO., Glastonbury, Conn.

SMART TOASTS
FOR SMART PEOPLE.

Etched on Brass and Framed in Dark Wood.
Size 9 1/4 x 6 1/4 in.



Something New for Summer Cottages, Club Houses, Dens, Whist Prizes, Birthdays. Appropriate Gifts From Anyone To Anyone.

\$1.25 each; postage 25 cents extra.
One sent prepaid, \$1.50; two to same address, prepaid, \$2.50; three to same address, prepaid, \$4.30.

Illustrated Booklet of other copyrighted designs, including Dame Fortune, Cupid, The Navy and Champagne Girl, sent on request. Write for our Year Book for 1903, 184 pages, illustrating everything in solid gold and sterling silver.

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200 ESSEX ST., SALEM, MASS.
ESTABLISHED 1867.

GORHAM
SILVER
POLISH

IN CAKE FORM

Cleans as well as polishes
Contains no deleterious ingredients
Produces the maximum effect with the minimum effort
Economical and facile in use

Price 25 cents a package

If unobtainable at your jewelers', send 25 cents in stamps for trial package to

The Gorham Co.
Broadway & 19th Street, New York

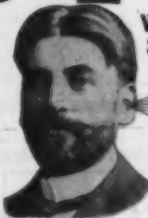
No Woman Need Be a Wall-Flower



The Secret of Perfect Development!
SENT FREE.

NO WOMAN cares to be a wall-flower and no woman need be if she will take advantage of what science has done for her benefit. It is the woman of the plump, well-rounded figure whose card at the ball is always filled while her skinny sisters sit out dance after dance. With the perfect development of form goes a beauty which has a peculiar attractiveness. She, who has such a figure, can always dress to advantage, while the most elaborate gowns lose their beauty when fitted to or draped on the angular woman. Any woman, never mind how thin or how angular she is, never mind how much she lacks in physical attractiveness, can make herself of perfect form and figure by a method which is simply marvelous in its results. The secret is hers for the asking. She can learn without any embarrassment how thousands of other women as little or less favored by Nature as herself have achieved that perfection of form so much to be desired. In order to obtain this secret of self-development at your own home, in your own room, without any assistance whatever, you have but to write a line of request, enclosing stamp to pay postage, and it will be sent you absolutely free in plain, sealed package, together with abundant evidence of results obtained and numerous photos from life. Address, **THE AURUM CO., Dept. K.B., 65 State St., Chicago, Ill.**

DEAF?



WHY REMAIN SO?
MY NEW, ORIGINAL, LIFE AND FORCE NATURAL METHOD CONNECTS THE ORGANS OF HEARING WITH THE WORLD
I DO NOT EXPERIMENT I CURE

HENRY ULLRICH, M. P. C. S. J-39 STATE STREET CHICAGO
ORIGINATOR OF THE LIFE METHOD
HOME TREATMENT NO DRUGS NO APPARATUS
FREE BOOKLET SILENCE IS AS DEATH

OPIUM MORPHINE and LIQUOR
Habits Cured. Sanatorium Established 1875. Thousands having failed elsewhere have been cured by us. Treatment can be taken at home. Write
The Dr. J. L. Stephens Co., Dept. V5, Lebanon, Ohio.

MORPHINE
Opium, Laudanum and all Drug Habits permanently and painlessly cured at home. Especially successful where so-called cures have failed. Our free trial treatment will convince you of its merits. Correspondence strictly confidential, in plain sealed envelope. **ALL SAINTS COMPANY, Childs Building, 34th Street and Broadway, New York.**



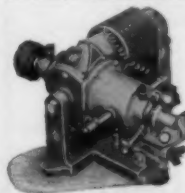
PAQUIN IMMUNE COMPANY,

RESORT MANAGERS

know the value of **THE SMART SET** as an advertising medium. It reaches all the people of wealth and social position in the United States. The patronage of its readers alone could make the future of a place assured.

GINSENG

\$25.00 made from one-half acre.
The most valuable crop in the world.
Easily grown throughout the U. S. and Canada.
Room in your garden to grow thousands of dollars worth.
ROOTS AND SEEDS FOR SALE.
Send four cents for postage and get Booklet B-J, which tells all about it.
MCDOWELL GINSENG GARDEN, JOPLIN, MO., U.S.A.



To Owners of Gasoline Engines, Automobiles, Launches, Etc.
THE

Auto - Sparker

does away entirely with all starting and running batteries, their annoyance and expense. No belt-to switch--no batteries. Can be attached to any engine now using batteries. Fully guaranteed; write for descriptive catalog.
MOTSINGER DEVICE MFG. CO.
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DRINK AND DRUG HABIT CURED By PAQUIN IMMUNE METHOD.

Drink habit permanently cured. Morphine, etc., positively cured in three days, without pain or even depression; no hypodermic injection.

I guarantee a cure, and will furnish you with endorsements from some of the best known ministers in the United States, and from the business men of our city.

Testimonials furnished on demand. Call on or address

Sanitarium, 2747 Olive Street, St. Louis, Mo.



Purifies Perspiration

in the armpits, on the dress shields, body, feet and clothing—Spiro Powder. Dusted on the skin and fabric it positively removes and prevents every body-odor; instantly relieves tired feet.

SPIRO POWDER

makes one cool, sweet and comfortable. On sale at drug, toilet and notion counters everywhere. 25c., or sent by mail for price. Free sample on request. Guarantee in every box.
SPIRO COMPANY, Niagara Falls, N. Y.

My Lady's Hose.

"There's hose and hose, I do suppose,
 Of a million kinds," said she;
 "But of all the hose this century knows,
 Onyx's the hose for me."

Ideal Summer Hosiery.

Veritable works of art in a host of dainty openwork effects, embroidered and lace insteps, etc.

"Onyx"

The world's recognized standard of choice quality, correct style and unrivalled finish.

FOR
**Women, Men
 and Children.**

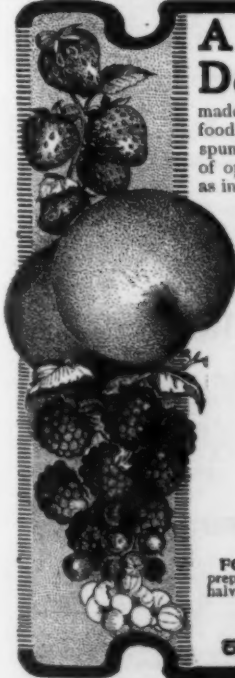
Sold Everywhere.

ASK FOR "ONYX."

If you cannot obtain it at your retailer's, communicate with

Lord & Taylor

(Wholesale) New York



A Most Delicious Dessert

Shredded Whole Wheat Biscuit is made in the most hygienic and scientific food laboratory in the world. The wheat is spun into light shreds, containing thousands of open pores and is not crushed flat and dense as in case of other foods. These pores absorb the digestive juices and provide far greater surface for their action than is given by any other food.

The following simple "course before coffee" is much in vogue with club men everywhere. The simplicity of preparation and the little cost, together with the delicious taste of the compotes, make this dessert in rare favor in the home.

Use Seasonable Fruit and

SHREDDED WHEAT BISCUIT

FOR SHORTCAKE—With sharp knife halve the Shredded Whole Wheat Biscuit lengthwise, prepare pineapple as for sauce (or bananas or mixed fruit) and set aside. When serving arrange halves in layers covered with fruit and add sugar and whipped cream.

Shredded Whole Wheat Biscuit is Sold by All Grocers.

Send for "The Vital Question" (Recipes, illustrated in colors) FREE. Address

The NATURAL FOOD CO., Niagara Falls, N. Y.



How to
 Split the
 Biscuit

Split and slightly toast the Biscuit, then serve with berries, sliced peaches, bananas or any seasonable fruit. Simple, isn't it. Your verdict will be

"Simply Delicious."

DIAMONDS ON CREDIT



OUR NEW SPECIAL SUMMER CATALOGUE

EVERY person interested in Diamonds will want a copy of our **NEW SUMMER CATALOGUE**, for it shows the latest creations in artistic Diamond mountings, fine jewelry and watches. These new and fine goods you will not find illustrated in the catalogues of other houses until next fall, for we are the only house in the Diamond and Jewelry business which issues a complete catalogue between seasons. Everything illustrated is quoted at exceptionally low prices and sold on the **POPULAR LOFTIS SYSTEM** of easy payments. Select any article that you like and it will be delivered at your door with all express charges paid. Only one-fifth of the price need be paid at first; the balance being arranged in a series of small monthly payments extending over eight months. No security is required; no interest is charged and no publicity is created when you buy on our **CONFIDENTIAL CHARGE ACCOUNT SYSTEM**. If you make a selection, it will be upon the distinct understanding that your money will be promptly returned in case you decide not to purchase. We are the largest concern in the business and sell only the finest genuine goods, and at prices ranging from ten to twenty per cent below those of other houses. Every Diamond is sold under a written guarantee of quality and value and may be exchanged at any time in the future for other goods or a larger stone at the full original price. Our Confidential Credit System is open to all honest persons without regard to their financial worth; but if you prefer to buy for cash we make the most startling and liberal offer ever made. It is no less than guaranteeing the return of all money paid at any time within one year—less ten per cent, the reasonable cost of doing business. We are one of the oldest houses in the trade (Est. 1898). We refer to any bank in America—for instance, ask your local banker to consult his *Dun or Bradstreet* book of commercial ratings and he will tell you that we stand at the top in credit, reliability and promptness. We have a number of attractive booklets that we will be glad to send you if you write promptly for our **New Summer Catalogue**.



LOFTIS BROS. & CO.

*Diamond Importers and
Manufacturing Jewelers*

Dept. G 20 92 to 98 State St. **CHICAGO, ILL.**
Opposite Marshall Field & Co.



Travel

You can't
Travel Write without a

**Waterman's
Ideal
Fountain Pen**

SOLD EVERYWHERE.

Purchase through home dealers, but do not fail to investigate the advantages offered in our new spoon feed.

L. E. Waterman Company
173 Broadway, New York.

35 Golden Lane, London. 6 Rue de Hanovre, Paris.

"The Busy Man's Train."

Appropriate in its Name,

Appropriate in its Route,

Appropriate in its Character--

"THE 20th CENTURY LIMITED."

This is *The* century of all the ages. The New York Central's 20-hour train between New York and Chicago (the two great commercial centres of America) is *The* train of the century, and is appropriately named

"THE 20th CENTURY LIMITED."

A copy of "America's Summer Resorts," will be sent free, postpaid, on receipt of a postage stamp by George H. Daniels, General Passenger Agent, New York Central & Hudson River Railroad, Grand Central Station, New York

If it isn't an Eastman, it isn't a Kodak.



THE KODAK GIRL

A vacation without a
Kodak
is a vacation wasted

No matter where you go or what your hobby may be, Kodakery will add to the pleasure of your trip. Anybody can make good pictures by the Kodak system. It's all by daylight, now that the Kodak Developing Machine has abolished the Dark-Room.

Kodaks, \$5.00 to \$75.00.

Kodak Developing Machines, \$2.00 to \$10.00.

Catalogues free at the dealers or by mail.
Kodak Portfolio, containing 40 prize
pictures from 44,000 Kodak competition,
ten cents.


EASTMAN KODAK CO.
Rochester, N. Y.



CLUB COCKTAILS

In your home or on your yacht CLUB COCKTAILS will delight the palate of your guests as no guesswork cocktail of your own making can. They are made from just as fine liquors as you can buy, but blended in exact proportions; to make not only a good cocktail but a perfect drink. Just strain through cracked ice. Seven kinds, Manhattan, Martini, Vermouth, Whiskey, Holland Gin, Tom Gin and York.

G. F. HEUBLEIN & BRO., Sole Proprietors,
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DEERFIELD WATER

Is pure, sweet and sparkling. As a Table Water it is delicious and healthful. Blends perfectly with all wines and liquors, and

"YOU REMEMBER THE TASTE"

Our Booklet tells the story.

THE DEERFIELD WATER CO.
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Hunter Baltimore Rye

**Takes Flavor from Maturity
And Fame from Purity**

Sold at all first-class cafes and by jobbers.
WM. LANAHAN & SON, Baltimore, Md.



*Absolute PURITY
Fine BOUQUET
Moderate PRICE*

Have made

Great Western Champagne

*—the Standard of
American Wines.*

Used in best homes
for dinners and
banquets.

The only American
Champagne to receive
GOLD MEDAL at the
Paris Exposition, 1900.

PLEASANT VALLEY WINE CO.,
Sole Makers, Rheims, N. Y.

Sold by respectable wine dealers everywhere.

Buffalo Lithia Water

Has for Thirty Years been Recognized by the Medical Profession as an Invaluable Remedy in Bright's Disease, Albuminuria of Pregnancy, Renal Calculi, Gout, Rheumatism and all Diseases Dependent upon a Uric Acid Diathesis. Time adds to the Voluminous Testimony of Leading Clinical Observers.

Dr. John V. Shoemaker, M. D., LL. D., *Professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in the Medico-Chirurgical College of Philadelphia. See Medical Bulletin, July, 1902. Gives full clinical notes of nine cases of Albuminuria of Pregnancy and three cases of Puerperal Convulsions in which*

BUFFALO LITHIA WATER was systematically used with gratifying results, and adds: "The habitual use of **BUFFALO LITHIA WATER** by women who are enceinte is a commendable precaution against the occurrence of Puerperal Convulsions."

Dr. Cyrus Edson, A. M., M. D., *Health Commissioner, New York City and State, President Board of Pharmacy, New York City, Examining Physician, Corporation Council, New York City, Etc., writes: "I have prescribed* **BUFFALO LITHIA WATER** *with great benefit in Bright's Disease."*

Medical testimony of the highest order, attesting the value of this water in the other diseases mentioned, mailed to any address. For sale by grocers and druggists generally.

Hotel at Springs opens June 15th.

PROPRIETOR BUFFALO LITHIA SPRINGS, VIRGINIA.

Business Men

DESIRING THE BEST CLASS OF

CLERKS, SALESMEN, AND OFFICE HELP

Can secure such by advertising their wants in

The Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin

(Office, 17 & 19 Beaver Street, New York.)

THE LEADING COMMERCIAL PAPER IN THE UNITED STATES.

Its **HELP WANTED** columns are patronized by the largest firms and corporations in the country, and offer most exceptional opportunities for those seeking positions or those desirous of bettering their condition or seeking new connections.

ADVERTISING RATES—Seven words to an agate line.

Help Wanted (35 words)	\$1.00 per time—	(Excess 20 cents a line).
Situations Wanted (33 words)50	" —(Excess 1½c. a word).
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Its market reports and business news items are known to be the most authoritative and reliable of any published.

Terms \$12.00 per year; \$6.50 for six months.

SAMPLES MAILED.



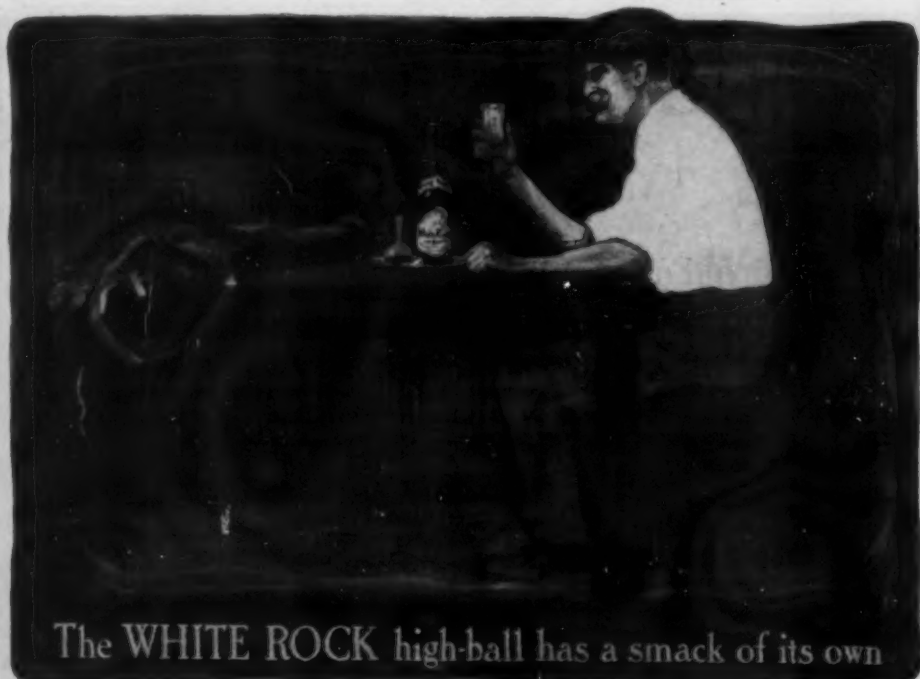
A Delicious Digestive

Chartreuse

—GREEN AND YELLOW—

THE HIGHEST GRADE CORDIAL.
A GLASS AFTER DINNER IS A
WONDERFUL AID TO DIGESTION

At first-class Wine Merchants, Grocers, Hotels, Cafes,
Bütjer & Co., 45 Broadway, New York, N. Y.
Sole Agents for United States.



The WHITE ROCK high-ball has a smack of its own



Pabst

brews beer to suit the popular taste; some light and some dark, but all absolutely pure. It's not an experiment, but an assured fact, and thus the widespread popularity of Pabst Blue Ribbon is explained.



"To American Supremacy!"

Neither the best grapes nor the best vintners are confined to Europe.

Connoisseurs have cast prejudice aside and declared that

COOK'S
Imperial
EXTRA DRY

in purity, flavor and bouquet is an absolutely perfect champagne.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TEST:
AVERAGE EFFERVESCENCE.

Imported Champagnes, 43 ³/₈ m.
Cook's Imperial, 47 m.
Carbonated Wines, 6 ³/₄ m.

See Report of Senatorial Committee on Pure Foods. 1900.

There is Character to a Cigarette. Also Tone and Individuality.

A made-to-order cigarette has just the tone desired and is made to suit YOU.

A shop cigarette may please—for awhile.

We make cigarettes to order of the Finest Turkish Tobacco with your Monogram on and make no charge for the marking.

There is much more to this "cigarette story."

A postal will bring the booklet, or we will mail you samples without marking for 25c.

PINKUS BROTHERS,

Suite 18, 56 New Street, New York City.

If Headachy

use



Stops the ache by freeing the system from decomposing waste matters.

It cleans you internally.

Warranted free from narcotic drugs.

At Druggists, 50c, and \$1.00, or by mail from

THE TARRANT CO. (Bus. Est. 1834.) NEW YORK.



DRINK ONLY THE PUREST

Fine Old

Ky. Taylor

Whiskey.

Useful Book, "Receipts for Popular Drinks," sent FREE to your address.

WRIGHT & TAYLOR,
DISTILLERS, LOUISVILLE, KY.

The Arbiters of Time

The Earth and
the Elgin
keep time
together



The Elgin Watch

is carried by men whose lives depend on time. The Elgin watch for women, though smaller in size, is identical in accuracy.

An illustrated history of the watch sent free.

ELGIN NATIONAL WATCH CO.
Elgin, Ill.

\$25 TO

COLORADO and back

Round-trip tickets Chicago to Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo at the above rate on sale daily July 1 to 10, good until August 31 to return. \$30.00 rate in effect daily, beginning June 1, good until October 31 to return.

Correspondingly low rates from other points. The

Colorado Special

A perfectly appointed train, leaves Chicago 6.30 p. m. every day. Only one night en route from Chicago and the Central States; only two nights from the Atlantic seaboard.

Another fast daily train leaves Chicago at 11.30 p. m.

The Best of Everything.

All agents sell tickets via the


Chicago & North-Western and Union Pacific Railways

For Colorado booklets and full information as to rates, schedules, etc., address

W. B. KNISKERN,
Pass' Traffic Manager,
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Chicago.

E. L. LOMAX,
General Passenger Agent,
Union Pacific R. R.,
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CS13



VACATION DAYS

Where are you going for your vacation this summer, and how?

There are many delightful places: Lake Chautauqua, St. Lawrence River, Adirondack and White Mountains, Atlantic Coast, Canada, Niagara Falls, South Shore of Lake Erie country, and its lovely Islands; lakes of the Northwest, Yellowstone country and Colorado places.

The service of the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railway—unequaled for completeness and comfort—may be used with greatest advantage for reaching all these summer places.


Privileges—Enjoyable privileges accorded on tickets over Lake Shore—stop-over at Lake Chautauqua, Niagara Falls, Lake Erie Islands, option of boat or rail between Cleveland and Buffalo, etc.

Summer Books—Sent for 6 cents postage by undersigned: "Lake Shore Tours," "Lake Chautauqua," "Quiet Summer Retreats," "Privileges for Lake Shore Patrons," "Book of Trains."

Boston Excursions—Over the Lake Shore, July 2, 3, 4 and 5. Good until September 1. Very low rates. All railways sell in connection with Lake Shore.

Chautauqua Excursions—Over Lake Shore, July 3 and 24, from all points west of Cleveland. Good 30 days. Low rates.

A. J. SMITH, G. P. & T. A., Cleveland, O.




AUTOMOBILING

There is no more exhilarating sport or recreation than automobiling. The pleasure of a spin over country roads or through city park is greatly enhanced if the basket is well stocked with

Dewar's Scotch

"White Label"

the popular brand both in this and the old country. "There is no Scotch like Dewar's," is a proverb among connoisseurs.

AN AUTOMOBILING POSTER.

"Automobiling" (copyright 1909, by Frederick Glassup) is an original drawing by E. N. Blue, shown herewith. Printed in four colors on heavy plate paper, without advertisement, and sent to any address on receipt of 10 cents in silver. Suitable for framing in club-house or home. Next month, a delightful camp scene by the famous artist, Dan Smith.

FREDERICK GLASSUP
Sole Agent for John Dewar & Sons, Ltd.
126 Bleecker Street, New York



MANDAN INDIAN WOMEN

of today
dress hides as their ~
~ ~ ancestors did.

"WONDERLAND 1903"
describes the MANDANS,
YELLOWSTONE PARK,
PUGET SOUND and the
COLUMBIA RIVER.

Send Six Cents for it to
CHAS. S. FEE, Gen'l Passenger Agent,
ST. PAUL, MINN.

25 Cents for "CLIMBING MT. RAINIER."

The Curse of Hymen

A REMARKABLY STRONG NOVEL OF LIFE IN
THE INNER CIRCLES OF NEW YORK SOCIETY

appears in that
famed quarterly magazine

TALES FROM TOWN TOPICS

JUNE NUMBER—JUST OUT

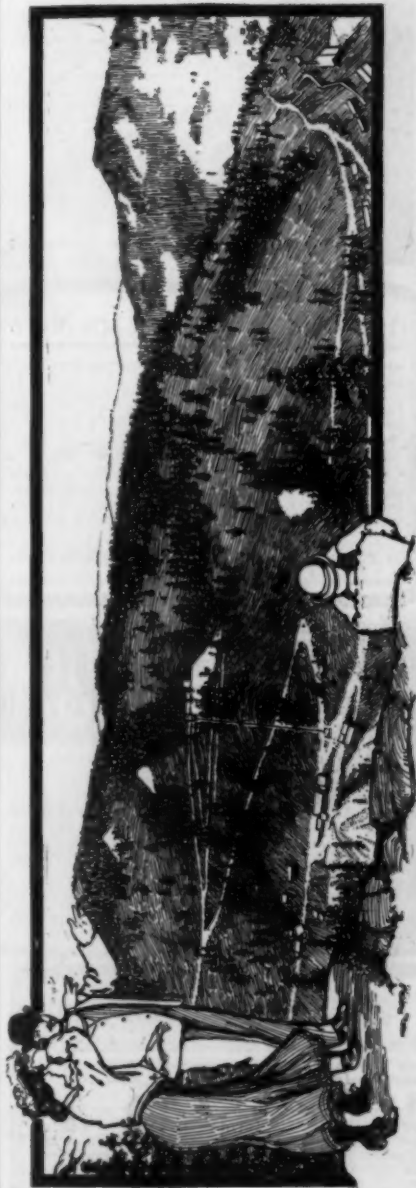
Also 50 short stories, poems and witticisms by
the brightest authors of the day.

A Critic Says:

"A remarkably strong story of life in the inner circles of New York society is 'The Curse of Hymen,' by J. H. Twells, Jr., the complete novel of *Tales From Town Topics* for June. The tragic incidents of an unhappy marriage form the basis of the story, and the social conditions that make such marriages too common are not spared. Yet there is nothing forbidding in the characters Miss Twells draws. Her hero is indeed an exceptionally attractive figure, strong and true without being a prig, and the girl who in the end crowns his happiness and brings all the complications to a happy issue is a delightful new acquaintance in literature. The story is a faithful study from life, and the picture it presents of the fashionable set in the

metropolis may safely be accepted as correct.

"The short stories that follow have the familiar characteristics long associated with this unique quarterly. Whether humorous or serious, they are distinguished nearly always by some special attractiveness of invention or style. Among the best are 'Dmitri of the Don,' by Anneta Josefa Halliday; 'A Modern Gabriela,' by Charles Stokes Wayne; 'The Warrington Divorce,' by Kate Masterson; 'An Adventure Which Taught,' by the Divorcée, and 'In Silk Attire,' by Percival Pollard. For variety there are light, clever essays on Saratoga, Newport and on 'The Hotels of Manhattan,' an abundance of good verse, one or two excellent little burlesques and many brief witticisms."



OVITT'S OREGON OUTING

Were you ever in a Gold Mine? Would you enjoy going through one? Most people would, but as a general rule very few can visit the gold mines of the far west, owing to the expense entailed and the time necessary to make the trip. I offer you an opportunity to go out to Oregon and see some gold mines at **my** expense. I want to show all who care to avail themselves of my offer, and who are willing to assist in the development of the gold mines of the west, that the gold mines we have out in the Sumpter district are not only profitable, but are also a wonderful trip of seeing in believing with most people, and a trip through these mines that I am exploiting will prove an object lesson for the beholder that no printed description could possibly equal in impressiveness.

This is a colossal undertaking. To take a party half across the continent and back again and pay all the expenses of such a trip will be a great achievement.

It means that all men and woman who takes the trip will come back home filled with enthusiasm over the prospects of these mines, which I stand sponsor for. It means—or will mean—that in all probability every share of Cracker Jack stock will be subscribed for before the conductor calls "all aboard" for the return journey. It is just another scheme to sell stock, I'll admit, but it proves that I must

OVITT'S OREGON OUTING, Main Offices: A 31-61 Merrill Bldg., MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Lee Q. Ovitt
FISCAL AGENT.

BRANCH OFFICES:

New York, - A 352 Stewart Building.
Boston, - A 832-844 Board of Trade Building.
Pittsburg, - A 714 Penn Building.
St. Louis, - B 438 Odd Fellows Building.

WRITE ME AT ANY OF THESE ADDRESSES.

be pretty enthusiastic myself over these Gold Mines, else I would hardly risk taking a party out to go through the property.

It looks like that, doesn't it?

Now the time is short. There are certain conditions attached to these round trip tickets, that almost any person can meet easily—and the

admission to the mines is free. My room is limited, too. Can't take all who will want to go, so it will be a case of first come, first served. **You had better write to-day.**

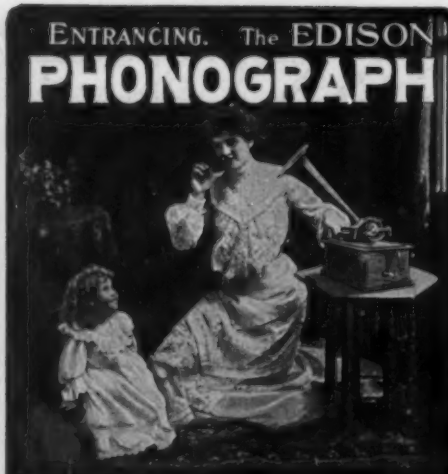
Oregon is one of the grandest of the States. Her scenic beauties are little known, but once seen are never to be forgotten. My party will travel in special cars, and will be given every attention during the trip and at the mines.

It will be a pleasant and profitable outing, upon from this advertisement and write your name and address upon it. Then mail it to me.

I will send you full particulars by return mail, so you will have ample time to qualify for

Lee Q. Ovitt, Fiscal Agent, Merrill Bldg., Milwaukee, Wis.
Send me full particulars of "Ovitt's Oregon Outing." This inquiry carries with it no obligation on my part.

Name.....
Address.....
I am ad. in THE SMART SET.



ENTRANCING. The EDISON PHONOGRAPH

Don't judge the **Phonograph** by what you have heard—the imitations or the old styles—but call at the nearest dealer's and hear the **Phonograph** with Mr. Edison's recent improvements.

5000 DEALERS SELL PHONOGRAPHS
NATIONAL PHONOGRAPH CO., Orange, N. J.
NEW YORK CHICAGO SAN FRANCISCO EUROPE: ANTWERP, BELGIUM
10 Chambers St. 204 Walnut Ave. 555 Market St. 22 Remport Saint Georges



The why some shop-keepers do not sell President Suspenders

is they make more money on imitations 50 cents and a dollar. Ask at favorite shop,

or post prepaid from

C. A. Edgerton Mfg. Co.
Box 259N, Shirley, Mass.
Send 6 cents for catalogue.



The Secret of a Good Complexion

All women who desire beauty should embrace this opportunity To secure a 60-day daily treatment of Dr. Campbell's Safe Arsenic Complexion Wafers and Fould's Medicated Arsenic Soap for

ONE DOLLAR

If your blood is impure or if you have pimples, freckles, wrinkles, blackheads, redness of face or nose, a muddy, sallow skin or any blemish whatever on or under the skin, you should procure at once these marvelous beautifiers of the complexion, skin and form. This ad. must be sent with your order. If you cannot send now, cut this out and send when it is convenient, as this offer will be good any time if this ad. is sent with your order. Address all orders to H. B. FOULD, Room 44, 214 6th Avenue, New York. Sold by Druggists Everywhere.

SPECIAL NOTE.—A new edition of our magnificent book, entitled "Your Face is Your Fortune," is ready, and until the edition is exhausted, will be sent Free to ladies who wish to know the secrets of real Beauty.



The FIGURE BEAUTIFUL

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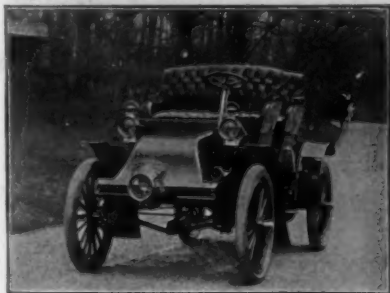
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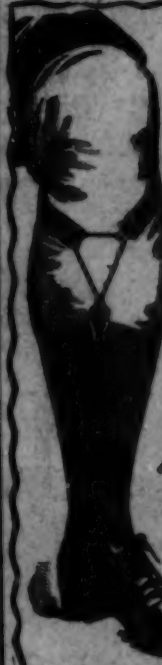
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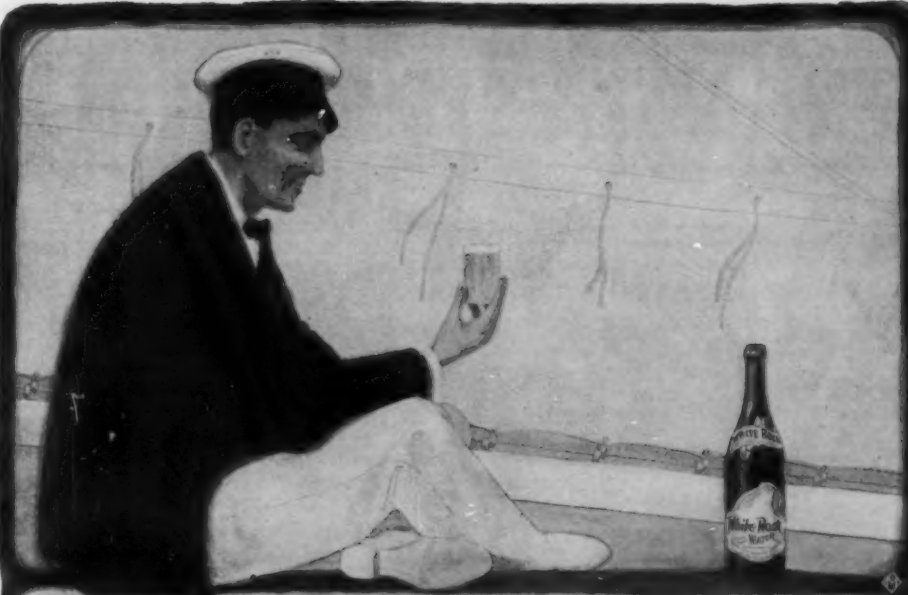
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A MAGA
ZINE

Vol. X

AUGUST, 1903

No. 4

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*The September number of THE SMART SET will contain:
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*Among the other contributors to the September number will be: John Strange Winter, Brander Matthews,
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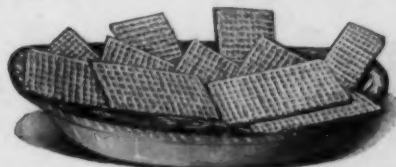
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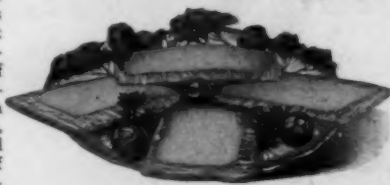
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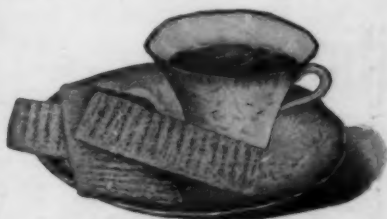


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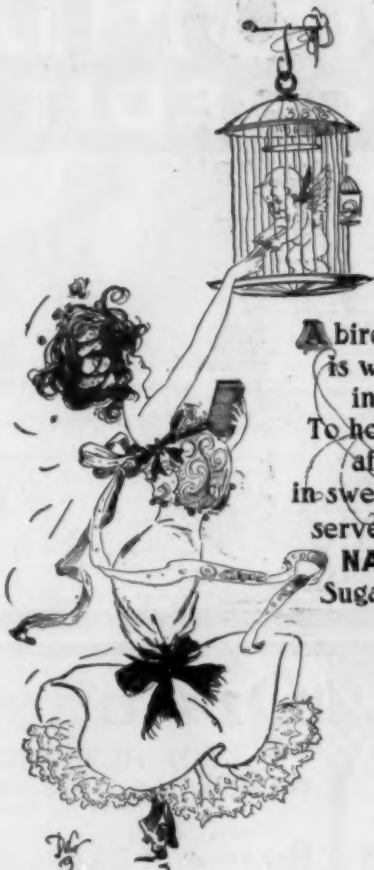
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Gradual tints as when there glows
In snowy milk the hushful rose."
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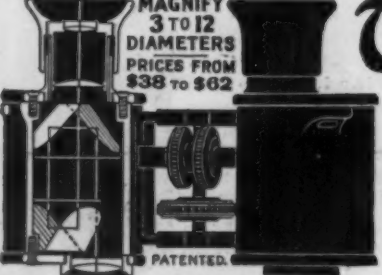
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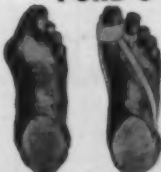
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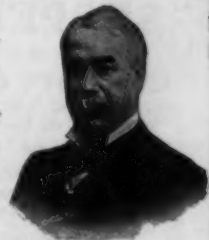
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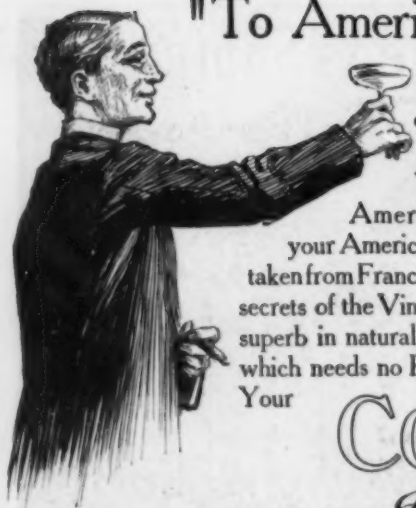
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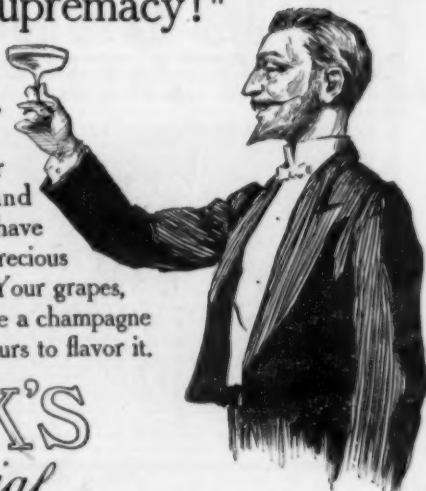
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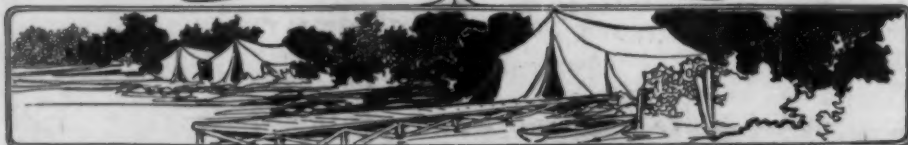
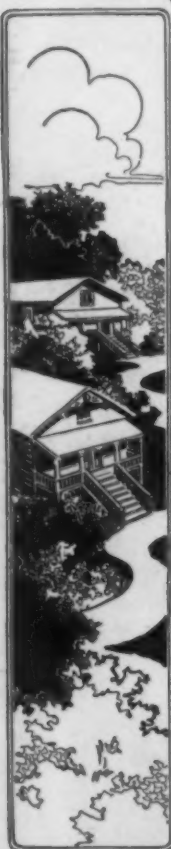
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